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EDITORIAL

DOWN NOT OUT IN CALIFORNIA

George Bush was doing the campaign thing in L.A. He had temporarily suspended the vacation thing in Maine and seemed permanently to have finessed the vice-presidential thing in Washington. Now he was ceremonially opening a gas station, or more exactly, inaugurating the first retail methanol pump in the area. On a cool and windy Sunday morning he climbed onto a platform erected in front of the AM/PM convenience-store section of an Arco gas station on Wilshire Boulevard, across from the Dukakis headquarters and near the Ambassador Hotel. If he had looked up and craned his neck, he could have seen a billboard above that infamous landmark: "In Memoriam. Robert Kennedy. June 6, 1968." It would be twenty years the next day.

Except for a small knot of reporters and Arco ringers, the scene was desolate and devoid of people, in that post-holocaust way that Los Angeles often looks, as if it has survived a neutron bomb with its buildings intact and its population vaporized. Bush faced a deserted Reform synagogue across the street. If his advance people had thought about it, they would have realized that Saturday was a better day than Sunday for crowds in that location. Well, as Bush recently said to a black child in a ghetto grade school who admitted he didn't like homework, "Comme ci comme ça." The man has an uncanny ear for *le mot juste.*

By contrast, Jesse Jackson was barnstorming around the state on a timetable loaded with back-to-back events and impeded only by gridlock on the freeways and skylock in the air. He whizzed into Watts then bopped to a fund-raiser in a Hollywood disco, where Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson sang a song composed for the occasion, with the chorus "Roll on, Brother Jesse Jackson." In a flash he was back in a poor

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MUNICH IN MOSCOW
Alexander Cockburn

PRETORIA'S IRON CURTAIN
George Black
Michael Maren

HARD LABOR IN CHINATOWN
Peter Kwong
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PRESERVING WALDEN POND
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'A WORLD APART'
James Lardner

LETTER FROM EUROPE

IN THE HEART OF LE PEN COUNTRY

DANIEL SINGER

Marseilles, France

"It cries in my heart as it rains on the town," wrote Verlaine, and it was pouring over Marseilles as I arrived just before the Whitsun holiday. Then the mistral cleared the sky and the sun shone on all the celebrated landmarks: the vast avenue of the Canebière descending to the Old Harbor, the Vieux Port itself, with its armada of small boats in white or blue, and the bigger ones taking the tourists to the Château d'If of Monte Cristo fame. But for all the fine weather, the time was for tears rather than smiles in Marcel Pagnol's country. With 102,541 of its 361,804 voters picking Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first presidential round in April, Marseilles, the old melting pot, the gateway to Africa and the Orient, has become the racist capital of Europe.

As last week's national elections approached, all the main leaders of Le Pen's xenophobic National Front swooped over the region, the department of Bouches-du-Rhône, like vultures in search of parliamentary seats. Le Pen himself picked the eighth district of Marseilles (where in April he had polled nearly 30 percent). But attention is already being focused beyond the current election, toward the Ides of March, the likely date of next year's poll for the Town Hall. Can a neofascist become the mayor of France's second city? The very fact that the question can be raised requires a lot of explanation.

The Thug and the Politician. If you want to see a folkloric image of the danger, take the left side of the Old Harbor, move beyond the restaurants whose enterprising owners solicit you to taste their bouillabaisse, to the Bar des Yachts. You

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EXCHANGE.

HOMELESSNESS: WHOSE FAULT?

New York City and Washington

We write to express our dismay at the style and content of Theresa Funiciello's review of Jonathan Kozol's *Rachel and Her Children* in the April 2 *Nation* ["Give Them Shelters"].

We agree with her observation that the focus on homelessness can lead to neglect of the broader poverty problem, of which lack of housing is an extreme manifestation. And we share her lament that emergency shelter is becoming institutionalized as the solution to homelessness, but the advocates whom she castigates share the same lament. It is a shame that some of her substantive points are obscured by personal attacks. To blame Jack Doyle, Kim Hopper, Nancy Travers and the Coalition for the Homeless for this policy is not fair or accurate. It is akin to the right-wing position that blames social welfare programs for the problems of poverty. Moreover, it deflects attention from the main source of homelessness: rapacious real estate interests and a government committed to laissez-faire for the poor. The notion of shelters as a panacea is abhorrent to us all, and must be opposed.

To build her case against advocates, Funiciello makes assertions that are simply false. She states, for example, that Doyle, Hopper and Travers "shared a cooperative." The fact is that they (and their neighbors) were homesteaders in an abandoned building in the North Bronx, and were also active in the local housing movement. Hopper's writings on the systemic causes of homelessness, and his sensitivity to homeless people, have been exemplary. Where were *The Nation*'s fact-checkers when such charges were advanced?

Her charge that the Coalition for the Homeless has a vested interest in confining the homeless in shelters instead of providing permanent housing is specious. True, some nonprofit organizations have become invested in perpetuating their services, although Funiciello cites no evidence. However, there is substantial evidence that the coalition has increasingly become a prime advocate (in national, state and municipal forums) for permanent, affordable housing while it has also fought for the right to shelter and for humane shelter management.

We all recognize that, while permanent affordable housing is what we must fight for, it takes (at best) months, usually years, to produce such housing: Those homeless today need a decent roof over their heads tonight. We doubt whether the homeless families, whom Funiciello claims to speak for, would disagree with the need for such a two-pronged strategy.

Funiciello is an important advocate, but her angry blast only adds fuel to the right-wing argument that it is O.K. to cut programs for the poor, claiming that the only people hurt are the bureaucrats and the care providers. Under that guise, conservatives have justified devastating cuts in programs for the poor. And the result, of course, is that the numbers of homeless people have multiplied.

If Funiciello's assertions were true, they would be of concern to us all, and we would want such matters exposed. However, her charges are not true.

Nancy Biberman
Richard Cloward
Cushing Dolbeare
Chester Hartman
Ruth Messinger
Frances Fox Piven
Barry Zigas

HOW DO YOU SPELL RELIEF?

New York City

The essays published in the April 2 issue reviewing Jonathan Kozol's new book on homeless families form a powerful chorus for the principle that there is a solution to mass homelessness, and that the solution is housing. Whether housing is seen as a complete answer to homelessness or as a fundamental first step in creating empowered and self-sufficient citizens is largely a question of semantics. The point is plain: We need housing.

Informed solutions to homelessness are really not so complicated, and they are really not so controversial. No one should disagree that all homeless people need a home. Nor should anyone disagree that considerable numbers of homeless people need a home plus some support—job training, remedial education, day care, medical or psychiatric care and, most emphatically, jobs. Further, no one should dispute that support services, in the absence of a home, are not likely to work. These are the principles that must guide a solution to homelessness, and regardless of ideology, they basically remain the same.

Still, for the sake of bogus scholarship, I suppose, disputes must be generated. One essay, by Theresa Funiciello, does so, although without an abundance of honesty. Misrepresentations aside, the author's premise is dead wrong.

Contrary to the writer's claim, there is no deep-rooted conflict between a need for decent emergency assistance—food and shelter—and a need for housing as the rational, permanent solution to homelessness. Maligning the motivations of relief workers (even when they are the sons of governors) mistakes the imperative one rightly feels to feed the hungry child today; feeding a child, while no reform of an unjust world, is certainly something more than a palliative.

Obviously, the only solution to homelessness, as Congress recognized forty years ago, is "a decent home and suitable living environment" for every American. So a right to housing must be the primary objective of any national effort to end homelessness. To do battle for housing, however, is not immediately helpful to the family living on the streets tonight. An ideologue may say that's an impolitic admission to make. But when you hold a homeless child, ideology is quickly replaced by pragmatism.

Stopgap measures to maintain life are indeed legitimate, particularly while building the political constituency for what promises to be a protracted struggle to win a right to housing.

Consequently, certainly legislation and litigation seeking a right to subsistence should be pursued. While mindful that food and shelter alone are no solution to homelessness, one is bound to recognize that sheer survival is an objective good that must be protected, at times through emergency shelter that meets basic standards of human decency.

Similarly, incremental legislation that creates housing sufficient to meet the needs of some, even if not all, people is rightly pursued in the current era when Washington is in the throes of a radical repudiation of fifty years of Federal housing policy.

Piecemeal reform, recognized as such, constitutes no threat to lasting structural change. It is only when makeshifts are mistaken for solutions that a reformist strategy risks being scuttled by the pragmatics of compromise. So while pushing for the immediately obtainable, one must be relentless in insisting that nothing short of sufficient, affordable housing for all is enough.

So yes, people in the trenches fighting for and with the homeless do affirm the importance and worth of securing even a single bed for the night. But at the same time we affirm that the struggle to ease human suffering must ultimately be directed at eliminating those conditions that make the suffering occur in the first place.

The only excuse for a right to shelter or a right to food is that some folks, who might not otherwise make it, will be around to enjoy the right to permanent, affordable housing once it is secured. All efforts, including those that merely cadge a safe place for a single night, or a cup of milk for a hungry child, are driven by this double vision.

Robert M. Hayes
Founder
National Coalition for the Homeless

DON'T GIMME SHELTER

Philadelphia

The National Union of the Homeless, since its inception in April 1985, has consistently called for an end to the outrageous proliferation of the shelter system. We wholeheartedly agree with the central theme of Theresa Funiciello's recent article—build homes, not

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EDITORIALS.

Gaining on AIDS

The road to oblivion is paved with reports of presidential commissions. Yet the odds seem better than usual that many of the recommendations in the report by the President's AIDS commission, which is due in the Oval Office on June 24, will work their way into the Washington policy mills. The commission and its straight-arrow chair, Adm. James Watkins, deserve praise for the conscientious way they pursued their investigation and confounded initial perceptions that the panel had been stacked against people with AIDS.

Two notable features of Admiral Watkins's draft report, most of which is expected to be approved by the full commission, were the proposals for laws to guarantee the civil rights of HIV-seropositive persons against all forms of discrimination and the confidentiality of those who seek diagnosis and treatment. The report also focuses national purpose with its recommendation that $3 billion be spent on a host of innovative programs.

The report represents a landmark advance in the way this country thinks about the AIDS crisis. The resounding rejection in last week's California primary of a ballot initiative

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calling for quarantining people with AIDS was another watershed of public opinion. The recent mailing to 107 million households of Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's pamphlet "Understanding AIDS" is further evidence that sound public health policy, based on science and respect for human dignity, is replacing hysteria grounded in ancient biblical superstition.

The rise in violent acts against homosexuals last year is a stark reminder that the forces of hatred are still formidable. More effective education on safe-sex practices, particularly among the young, is essential. Nevertheless, the once-lonely voices of the gay community and enlightened doctors are now being heard in high places.

Middle East Mix

Five years ago, in an editorial decrying the futility of armed struggle as a way for Palestinians to secure their legitimate rights ["Gandhi in Gaza," May 28, 1983], we wrote: "The Palestinians do have one potent option left: waging nonviolent political warfare in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip." The tactics of the *intifadah*—strikes, boycotts, creation of alternative institutions—and the concurrent revival of Palestinian hopes show that Palestinians have learned this lesson. (In the Middle Eastern spectrum of conflict, stone-throwing is fairly close to the nonviolent end.) And with their eighteenth leaflet, the uprising's clandestine leaders have indicated that if Israel takes certain steps, including ending the state of siege in the territories and withdrawing the army from population centers, a resolution to the struggle might be found. Israel's response, however, has been negative.

On June 5, Israel's High Court upheld Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's decision to deport Mubarak Awad, director of the East Jerusalem–based Palestinian Center for the Study of Non-Violence. Awad's main role in the *intifadah* has been organizing boycotts of Israeli products and teaching Palestinians to become more self-sufficient. Three days before his expulsion was sealed, four Israelis who met with Palestine Liberation Organization members in Rumania in 1986—including *Nation* contributor Yael Lotan [see "When Israelis and Palestinians Meet," February 7, 1987]—were convicted by a lower court of violating an Israeli law prohibiting such meetings. The four intend to appeal the decision. But the crackdown on Palestinians and Israelis pursuing peace again suggests that, like Pharaoh in Moses' time, the occupiers' hearts have only been hardened by the uprising.

Still, mixed signals on the Arab-Israeli conflict abound. In the wake of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, both superpowers are singing a new tune. Secretary of State George Shultz arrived in Cairo and declared, "The fate of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism are interdependent." At the root of the conflict is the "competition between two national movements for sovereignty on one land." For the first time, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze met with Israeli Prime Minister Shamir in New York City, bringing their two countries an inch closer to normal relations. A similar rapprochement between the United States and Syria continues, with both countries quietly maneuvering for influence in advance of Lebanon's late summer presidential elections. But on the twenty-first anniversary of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli-Palestinian coexistence is still far off.

China's Children

After reviewing the mounting evidence that the one child per family stricture has resulted in a vast increase in female infanticide, the Chinese government has taken steps to relax its policy, which was instituted to reduce the national birth rate. At the opening ceremony of the International Conference on Strategic Management of Population in Beijing on May 3, Peng Peiyun, the new Minister in charge of state family planning, stated:

> The country's current family planning policy is to promote late marriage and late birth, fewer but healthier births, the practice of "one couple, one child"; *to allow couples in rural areas with one daughter to have a second child with planned spacing; and to avoid second or multiple births outside their control.* [Emphasis added.]

This was not announced as an official change in policy, but it represents one. Although the one-child family remains the ideal, and all kinds of rewards are offered to those who adhere to the program, the new policy marks an attempt to deal with Chinese tradition, dating at least from the time of Confucius and still strong today, which holds that the most unfilial act a person can commit is to leave no posterity—that is, failing to have a son.

The Chinese gynecologist Gu Zushan, who surveyed rural families in the early 1980s, reported that if forced to choose the sex of their only child, 80 percent would prefer a boy. The inevitable result of such a preference was a rise in female infanticide. This phenomenon became evident in 1980, one year after the single child per family policy was proclaimed. In a village in Hupei province, for example, the ratio of boys to girls under 1 year old had reached 503 to 100 by 1982 (the norm is 106 to 100). Disproportionate ratios also appeared in the cities, where Communist control is much greater. In Wuhan, one of the ten largest cities in China, the ratio was 154 males to 100 females in 1982. In 1984, Chungking, the capital of China during World War II and also one of its ten largest cities, reported more than 2,800 cases of female infanticide. Punishments for the crime escalated in the mid-1980s, but they apparently had little effect. The one-child-family emphasis, however, did cut down China's population growth rate to 14.39 per 1,000 in 1987 (representing a birth rate of 21.04 per 1,000 minus the death rate of 6.65 per 1,000), a remarkable achievement considering the disproportionate number of Chinese in their childbearing years.

The increase in female infanticide was only one symptom of the Chinese government's failure to police its single-

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child policy in the villages (where 80 percent of its population lives). Not only does the new policy conform with reality in the Chinese countryside, it will also save the lives of firstborn infant girls. But the problem still exists in the cities, where the government's stance remains unchanged, and how long the Chinese can tolerate female infanticide in urban areas is a matter of major concern. The one-couple, one-child program is also complicated by the fact that in some cities 60 percent of abortions occur among unmarried teen-agers, a problem the Chinese are finally attempting to deal with by launching a massive sex-education campaign.

Since the Chinese now number 1.08 billion, the methods that they employ to deal with their population problems are of wider concern. It is commendable that the government has finally recognized the problem of female infanticide, but the problem of excessive population growth will not easily disappear.

VERN L. BULLOUGH
AND FANG-FU RUAN

Vern L. Bullough is distinguished professor and dean of natural and social sciences at the State University of New York, Buffalo. Fang-fu Ruan is a visiting scholar from Beijing who has written extensively on sex and medicine in China. He also holds an adjunct appointment in the school of nursing at SUNY, Buffalo.

California

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

black tract called Nickerson Gardens, where he spent the night at the home of a distressed family suffering the many indignities his campaign has addressed: a mother with three kids on inadequate welfare and without access to child care that would allow her to take a job, in a desperate community barraged by drugs, guns and gang warfare. The next morning he met with a delegation from the notorious gang called the Bounty Hunters, much to the horror of the gang on the press bus, who thought they were on the set of *Colors*.

Jackson didn't bring peace to the land, but he did charm some of the young gangsters before he flew to McFarland, a dusty town in the southern San Joaquin Valley near Delano, where César Chavez waged his great United Farm Workers union organizing campaign in the 1960s. Vast vineyards, orchards and fields of row crops surround the homes of the farm workers and their families in a scene of staggering fecundity, profitability and technical triumph. Publicly funded irrigation has made the desert bloom, agribusiness has brought prosperity to the region, and the government (via the Farm and Home Administration) has given the workers affordable housing and the beginnings of secure community.

But there is a serpent in this Eden. Something is killing and sickening the residents—and especially the children—in "clusters" within the neat, new housing tracts. In one cluster, an area of only a few blocks, sixteen children have been diagnosed as having cancer, and scores more are being treated for an array of exotic and unexplained maladies that would test the therapeutic capability of huge urban hospitals. I sat in the living room of one family's house, right up against a field of young cotton plants stretching almost to the horizon, and saw mothers from the neighborhood troop through with their children: a hydrocephalic infant; a girl with intractable skin ulcers; severely underweight, almost emaciated teen-agers. Experts disagree on the cause of the problem. Some say the wells may be poisoned. Others think the ubiquitous pesticides in the air are to blame. One woman whose three daughters have been ill for years was told by the local doctor that the problem was "stress," caused by her divorce and the anomalous status of a single parent in the tight Hispanic family environment.

Jackson spent a night in McFarland, at the home of one of the cancer patients, and a few days before the primary he came back to lead a march through the town in protest against the violence that is afflicting its citizens, just as surely as drugs and gangs are injuring the people of Nickerson Gardens. In many ways, the McFarland event was a perfect metaphor for the entire Jackson campaign, both in meaning and strategy. The violence here is economic, political and cultural. Eight great agribusiness corporations control the surrounding land. Four of them are owned by oil companies and two—Chevron and Shell—are prime suppliers of the pesticides that douse the earth and invade its inhabitants. The corporate structure is interlocked with the banks, the water authorities, the local governments, the media and of course with state and national political powers. A third of Kern County's residents are Latino, but there is only one Latino elected official out of hundreds within its boundaries. The people are not only dying; they are powerless.

Jackson's campaign here, as elsewhere, sought to bring a share of power to people who have none or little, by urging them to collective action both within and without traditional electoral politics. He identified and organized his constituents by community, institution and affiliation. He brought in activists, specialists and celebrities from other areas and different interest groups to add importance, legitimacy and media attention to the powerless in isolation. Jackson's McFarland march, for instance, was joined by the Farm Workers' Chavez, by Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower, by movie actors, pop singers, L.A. liberals and young blacks from Watts.

Jackson did about as well as he could with his unconventional and (now it can be said) radical project. On primary day he got about 35 percent of the Democratic vote. In an atmosphere of calm, without a generalized sense of crisis, those with power are usually able to convince a majority of voters that empowerment is a zero-sum game, and that the more it is given to "special interests" such as farm workers, blacks and families on welfare, the less will be available to the dominant interest group, whatever that happens to be. And we do know what it happens to be.

The genius of Michael Dukakis's campaign has been that he has avoided promises, concessions or even giving attention to specific groups, except when absolutely pushed to the wall (as he was in his brief hardhat period in March in the

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Midwest Rust Belt, for instance). His speeches around California were as general as Jackson's were definite. He became the permanent "alternative" candidate, the safe bet against the high risk. Jackson played the politics of identity, Dukakis the politics of contingency. Jackson had constituencies, Dukakis constituents. "When I win, you win," Jackson repeated. "The maids win, the farm workers win, the gays and lesbians win, the peace workers win." Dukakis's message was shorter: Trust me.

The media says the campaign for the Democratic nomination is over, and in the traditional sense it is. But this has not been a conventional process, and there are surprises still in store. The peculiar amalgam of campaign-cum-movement that Jackson built looks like a permanent force in politics, and it will be difficult to swallow, fold or incorporate it into the Dukakis machine without significant power sharing. The party elite and many in the Dukakis campaign may fear the fights that are coming, but there is no easy way to avoid them, or to pretend that Democratic politics has not already been significantly transformed. ANDREW KOPKIND

UNCIVIL LIBERTIES.

CALVIN TRILLIN

Things have finally returned to normal among the teen-agers I know, after a spring filled with vocabulary tension brought on by the Scholastic Aptitude Tests.

"Relax," I kept saying to S, the teen-ager I know best, as the pressure in her crowd mounted. "I read that a lot of colleges don't pay much attention to S.A.T. scores anyway. Also, you can always go to work in the dime store."

"Relaxing would be a herculean task—meaning a task very difficult to perform," S said. "Because among my friends there's no dearth of anxieties. A dearth is like a paucity—a scarcity or scanty supply. In fact, most of the people I know have a plethora of anxieties—a surfeit, an overabundance."

All of S's friends were talking that way. One evening, when we were giving S's friend D a ride uptown, D said, "I'll be on the corner of Thirteenth and Sixth Avenue, in proximity to the mailbox."

"In proximity?" I said.

"Kind of in juxtaposition to the mailbox," D said. "That's a placing close together, or side by side. If I get tired while I'm waiting, you'll find me contiguous to the mailbox."

"What if someone wants to mail a letter?" I asked.

"If that eventuality—that contingent event, that possible occurrence or circumstance—occurs," D said, "I'll move."

This is not the way teen-agers normally speak. Ordinarily, they don't need many long words—or, for that matter, many words of any size. Some of them can make do for days on end with hardly any words at all beyond the word "like"—as in the sentence "Like, I said, 'Like, what?' and he was like, 'Like, O.K.'"

As it happens, listening to someone who says "like" every second or third word can get irritating. When S's father brings that fact to her attention, in an appropriately courteous and dignified manner ("If you say 'like' once more at this dinner table, you're going to be put in a foster home!"), S can explain why each use of the word "like" is absolutely logical.

She explains that "like" in some cases is used the way a non-teen-ager would use "more or less" or "sort of." She explains that "he was like" means not exactly "he said" but something more on the order of "his speech and his manner indicated." Her explanations sound persuasive—which is almost as irritating as listening to someone who says "like" every second or third word.

In fact, S has logical explanations for a lot of teen-age talk. She can explain why it's O.K. to use "stupid" or "crazy" as adverbs meaning "very" or "truly," so that you could say both "That guy is stupid crazy" or, if he happens to be stupider than he is crazy, "That guy is crazy stupid." She can explain the difference between snapping and ranking—both words for harassing or insulting—well enough to correct her parents at the dinner table, so that if her father says, "S, stop ranking on A," she might say, "That wasn't a rank. It was more of a harsh snap." S is, like, a scholar of teenspeak.

When I thought about that fact last spring, it occurred to me that the teen-agers I know wouldn't have been under any tension at all if only the S.A.T.s were given in their own language ("Like is to like as a: like is to like, or b: like is to like"). The problem emerged from the Educational Testing Service's stubborn insistence on giving the test in English. That hardly seems fair.

Think of how difficult it would be for non-teen-agers to bone up on vocabulary if they were required to take a test in teenspeak. I can imagine, say, two golfers of middle years and competitive temperaments ready to hit their drives on the first green. Al swats his drive right down the center of the fairway and says, "Super-fly fresh! That, as you may know, is an exclamation indicating approval or delight."

"The vocabulary test is not for another month," Jack says irritably, as he tees up. He hits a dribbler and starts pounding a nearby bush with his driver.

"Chill, money," Al says. "Which is to say: Relax."

"Speak English!" Jack shouts.

"Like, take a chill," Al says.

Jack turns toward Al, waving his driver in the air menacingly. Suddenly, S emerges from behind the bush.

"It's understandable that you have a plethora of anxieties," she tells Jack. "But you have to make a herculean effort to control them."

Jack, seeing the logic in that, puts the driver in his golf bag and apologizes for the outburst. "It was stupid crazy of me," he says.

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ "Look at All Those Negroes, Irma"

That is shaping up as one of the themes of George Bush's 1988 campaign. Robert Michel, a Republican Congressman from Illinois, was recently asked by *The Washington Post* about George Bush's flagging campaign. Don't worry, said Michel, Bush's prospects should pick up this summer, especially after the Democratic convention: "It will be surprising, I think, to some people when they look at the Democratic convention out there and see one-third blacks in that composition of delegates." If Michel held some important job, like that of an Al Campanis or a Jimmy the Greek, he would have been handed the pink slip. Michel, though, is merely the minority leader of the House of Representatives, and nobody in Washington objected. Imagine the furor that would have resulted if, say, a leading Congressional supporter of Jesse Jackson said, "People are going to be surprised when they turn on the TV and see all those WASPs and rednecks at the Republican convention."

Here's a reminder for Michel and others disturbed by blacks participating in politics: "The healthy mix of America's ethnic, cultural and social heritage has always been the backbone of our nation and its progress throughout our history. Without the contributions of innumerable ethnic and cultural groups our country would not be where it is today." That's from the Republican Party platform of 1984.

■ Your Invitation Must've Got Lost in the Mail

As some nervous Republicans dash to court racists, nervous Democrats are scurrying away from activists in their own party. Consider the party's platform-drafting process. Last month the Democrats held a forum in Washington to discuss the military and foreign policy planks. Local activists across the country, including some who sit on the 186-member platform committee, were given only three days' notice of the event, according to one committee member. The forum itself was dominated by former Governor Charles Robb and Senators Sam Nunn and John Glenn (who said, "We may have to spend more instead of less" on conventional weapons). In past election years the party held platform hearings nationwide to solicit a broad range of views. This year, the committee member complains, "the rules were changed to keep the process closed and limit input."

■ Old Liberals Never Die

By the end of this month a new sanctions bill against South Africa is expected to win approval in the House of Representatives. The measure, tougher than its predecessors, mandates a near-total trade embargo and full disinvestment of U.S. interests. Then the bill will go to the Senate, where some U.S. companies, including several oil firms, are hoping to derail it. Birch Bayh, the former self-styled populist Senator from Indiana, has joined the fight—against tougher sanctions. Bayh's law firm, Rivkin, Radler, Dunne & Bayh, is registered with the Senate to lobby on the bill for the innocently named National Foreign Trade Council, which a council employee told us "represents the interests of Big Business." We called Bayh to plead, "Say it ain't so, Birch." He didn't respond.

■ Lobbying Left and Right

Reichler, Appelbaum & Wittman, the Washington law firm that represents the Nicaraguan government, balances its ideological books by also lobbying on behalf of the government of Guatemala. The firm's leftist credentials have helped convince Congressional liberals to resume "non-lethal" military aid to the Guatemalan regime just as the country's armed forces are escalating their savage war against the political opposition. According to a recent Americas Watch report, a coroner from Santa Rosa Department noted 435 assassinations in 1987, a 33 percent increase over 1986. Americas Watch stated that although President Vinicio Cerezo "blamed violence on right-wing groups . . . the Archbishop and Guatemalan union leaders continue to blame government security forces for repression." Nevertheless, Paul Reichler, reached in Managua where he's advising the Sandinistas in peace talks with the *contras*, said, "Vinicio Cerezo is doing his best to establish a democratic government in Guatemala that respects human rights, that respects the rule of law. I'm not under any illusion that it can be done in five years." Guatemala pays Reichler's firm $200,000 a year.

■ From Mission Control to Damage Control

Earlier this year David Nagle, Democratic Representative from Iowa who sits on the Science, Space and Technology Committee, invited Washington lobbyists of the Morton Thiokol political action committee to a fund-raising party. Thiokol, you will recall, is the Utah company that made the famous flawed O-rings for the Challenger's rocket. The combination of cold weather and lousy craftsmanship sent seven astronauts to their doom. Thiokol, according to one aerospace lobbyist, was worried that Congress might award another firm a lucrative NASA contract that Thiokol was lusting after. Thus the welcome that greeted Nagle's invitation: An official at the Thiokol PAC said its representatives would be glad to attend; in fact, they would buy twice as many tickets as the Congressman had requested.

■ Regulating the Feds

The Center for National Security Studies has revived its call for Congress to enact an F.B.I. charter. At the end of a new report on the Bureau's surveillance of Central America solidarity activists, the center proposes a charter that "clearly defines the FBI's responsibilities when conducting criminal and terrorism intelligence investigations." Right now, the center notes, "the FBI is controlled only by Executive Order and Attorney General guidelines, both of which are open to indiscriminate change and interpretation." Some of the current guidelines are even classified. In the past Congress has been loath to create a clear set of rules for the Feds. This cop-out makes it easier for the political police to work their beat.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

Munich in Moscow

"Vibrant," "commanding," "master of detail," were all specimens of the verbal largesse showered on General Secretary Gorbachev by the world's press, contrasted with mostly genteel animadversions on the torpid mien of President Reagan, but all of this is far too kind to the substantive performance of the Soviet leader, which, at least in the international sphere, is becoming increasingly reminiscent of Sadat, who similarly gloried in his stature on the world stage without reflecting that his popularity in the West rose in exact proportion to his fidelity to the American agenda.

What's actually happened since Gorbachev and his supporters assumed control of Soviet foreign policy? As Professor Jerry Hough accurately remarked in the *Los Angeles Times* for May 20, "The INF treaty has not legitimized arms control for [U.S.] conservatives. It is an agreement without military significance and it was reached by [the United States] putting forward proposals that were so unreasonable that they surely would be rejected. They were not, and now conservatives will say that the treaty proves that if we stand tough with unreasonable demands the Soviets will cave in. Any real compromise by the next Administration will be denounced as craven weakness."

If Gorbachev thought that his ductility in the I.N.F. negotiations would lead to a quid pro quo from Reagan while in Moscow, he was mistaken. A new arms treaty is far off. Soviet offers of a protocol governing U.S.-Soviet conduct in the Third World (probably somewhat along the lines of the unofficial document I discussed here two weeks ago) were rejected, as was a major Soviet concession on the cutting of conventional forces in Europe. Martin Walker reported in the British newspaper *The Guardian* for June 3 that "the bulk of the Soviet foreign policy establishment, and half the Soviet army's general staff, are furious that the Americans barely seemed to notice the scale of the concession offered on cutting conventional forces in Europe."

Far more astonishing was Gorbachev's submission, aside from a few mumbled asides, to the breaching by the United States and Pakistan of the Geneva accord on Afghanistan, settled in April. The first point in this accord was the schedule for Soviet withdrawal. The Russians originally proposed a phased exit over a four-year period; the United States and Pakistan suggested a brisker time frame of four months. The Russians agreed to nine months, at which point the United States and Pakistan raised the idea of front-loading the withdrawal, with 50 percent of Soviet forces leaving in the first six months. The Russians agreed. The second point in the accord stipulated that the Soviet withdrawal would begin on May 15, at which point Pakistan and the United States would cease all military aid and provision of sanctuary to the mujahedeen. It was this precedent of an international agreement guaranteed by the two major powers, and with the United Nations entrusted to monitor compliance, that was particularly alluring to the Russians.

But just before George Shultz signed the accord, the United States announced that it would not stop aid to the mujahedeen until the Russians had stopped aid to the Afghan government. This was not part of the Geneva agreement, but the Russians, while protesting in principle, did nothing about it. In fact, the accord had been accompanied by a "nonpublic" letter from the United States, accepted by the Soviet Union, which appears to have formalized the parallelism the United States was seeking between its covert operations and Soviet relations with a sovereign government, stretching back to 1921. As Ahmed Rashid described in *The Nation* for May 21, U.S. and Pakistani intent, whatever the spirit of the accord, is not for a coalition in Afghanistan but for the installation of a fundamentalist Islamic regime. The favored candidate of President Reagan and General Zia is Gulbuddin Hekmetyar and his Hizbe Islamic Party, whose ideal of peaceful reconstruction is a theocracy promising license to landlords and death to women who remove the veil.

During the last weeks of negotiations in Geneva and those following the signing of the accord, the United States supplied – on estimates gathered by Eqbal Ahmad, long familiar with the issue and the area – somewhere between $600 million and $700 million worth of arms to the mujahedeen. An early batch was blown up in the famous arms dump explosion outside Islamabad. After that the United States sent a further $350 million to $450 million worth of arms via C-130 transport planes. According to Ahmad, the area has been flooded with arms, including another half-million dollars' worth from Saudi Arabia. Engineering equipment and concrete blocks suggest the construction of arsenals just over the Afghan border from Pakistan.

These maneuvers have been contrary both to the spirit of the Washington summit between Reagan and Gorbachev and to the letter of the Geneva agreement. The Russians have merely raised a few quacks of demur while their forces trundle home. This ignominious performance has involved serious political miscalculations. By early 1988, says Ahmad, contrary to mujahedeen propaganda faithfully reprinted in the U.S. press, the Afghan government was actually consolidating its position both in terms of recruitment to the People's Democratic Party and in securing its presence in the eastern part of the country. At the same time the mujahedeen was embroiled in furious factional disputes as the Islamic fanatics sought to buttress their several positions, highlighted by the murder, probably by Gulbuddin Hekmetyar's men, of Sayad Majrooh in the spring. The Pakistanis, too, were for the first time deeply divided on the appropriate role with respect to the negotiations and observation of the accord.

If the Russians had denounced the breach of the Geneva accord, and stated that they would henceforth conduct the withdrawal on their own terms, they would have fortified the Afghan government, rather than straightforwardly abandoning it, and would simultaneously have allowed the strains in the mujahedeen and in Pakistan to widen. They have thus far forfeited that opportunity.

The United States, no doubt astonished and delighted by such compliance, is now pressing this new "principle" of

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symmetry between aid to a sovereign government and aid to *contra* or other insurgent forces. The Russians appear to have accepted such symmetry between their support of the legally constituted government of Angola (mostly taking the form of Soviet weapons and Cuban soldiers) and U.S.-South African supply of the rapacious canaille of Unita, headed by Jonas Savimbi. The overall equation developing in southern Africa, entirely beyond the purlieus of international law, is an actual withdrawal of Soviet support, originally requested by Angola, as against a notional posture of negotiation by Savimbi and an even more notional withdrawal by South Africa from its illegal occupation of Namibia. Further staging posts in the evolution of this Gorbachev doctrine will no doubt include Nicaragua and Cambodia. No wonder Margaret Thatcher said of Gorbachev that here is a man "with whom we can do business."

Glasnost at Home and Abroad

Those who rightly stress Gorbachev's great domestic achievements in pressing for openness of discussion and democratization of the political process should beware that their enthusiasm for the General Secretary does not obscure the fact that *glasnost* is a two-way street, and so the opposition to Gorbachev should equally enjoy the new freedoms. Sometimes it seems as if Ligachev or another supposed leader of an opposing tendency could be bundled off to Siberia and both the Soviet and the U.S. press would hail this as a triumph for *glasnost* and the new thinking.

In the United States, *glasnost* took its usual back seat in the days surrounding the summit, as the corporate press loyally followed the state's agenda. On May 26 an ad hoc group called the Human Rights Coalition Project, acting as liaison for a number of organizations, held a press conference at the Church Center opposite the United Nations to draw attention to human rights violations in the United States and countries dependent on U.S. aid. Among those present were John Powell, legal director of the A.C.L.U.; Russell Redner, coordinator of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee; Anthony Gonzalez, with the International Indian Treaty Council/American Indian Movement; William Kunstler, representing the Center for Constitutional Rights; and Josefina Rodriguez, from the National Campaign to Abolish the Lexington Women's Control Unit.

The plan was to tell the press of human rights issues that the liaison group wanted to see addressed at the Moscow summit, concerning U.S. government harassment of nonviolent political groups; political prisoners in the United States; violations of the rights of American Indians; U.S. immigration policies that discriminate against refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and so forth. Philippa Winkler, who organized the press conference, tells me that she sent notices to all major news organizations and made frequent attempts to advise them of the event. From *The New York Times* she was told of turf uncertainties between the metro and foreign desks. National Public Radio said it was understaffed. In the end precisely two members of the U.S. press showed up, a reporter from U.P.I. (whose story does not seem to have been picked up by any newspaper) and a reporter from the left weekly *The Guardian*. A lot of international reporters were present, including some from the Soviet Union, who asked why their U.S. colleagues hadn't bothered to come.

The U.S. mainstream press plainly regarded questions raised in Moscow about treatment of American Indians as an irrelevant embarrassment. I found the text of President Reagan's horrifying remarks on the subject in *The Wall Street Journal* in a small box at the foot of a page, under the headline "Reagan's Reply to Question Angers American Indians." *The New York Times* tucked the story away too. In case anyone missed it, the President of the United States said that American Indians wanted to live on "preservations" (where some of them had become very wealthy pumping oil) and that "maybe we should not have humored them in that, wanting to stay in that kind of primitive life style. Maybe we should have said no, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us." Indians are citizens.

The criticism Reagan got for his actions in Moscow came from *The Washington Times*, which called him "something of a fool," and from A.M. Rosenthal and a *Washington Post* editorialist objecting to his conversion to Leninism à la Gorby. The British press was less reverent. In *The Times* of London, Michael Binyon described Reagan's performance at his press conference as replete with "rambling answers, inconclusive sentences, hesitations and apparent difficulty in grasping the point of many questions." Martin Walker's wrap-up column in *The Guardian* for June 3 noted Nancy Reagan's cavalier treatment of the long-prepared exhibition of icons at the Tretiakov Gallery; the President's dismissal of Soviet proposals on conventional force reduction in Europe; and the possible negative consequences for Gorbachev of Reagan's uncompromising comportment on human rights and international issues.

In an editorial for May 31, *The Guardian* made some obvious points I was unable to find in any U.S. newspaper:

> Imagine a few reverse scenarios. The Soviet leader lands in Washington and promptly lays into the mining of Nicaragua's ports, the drug trafficking of General Noriega, the squalor of Skid Row, the manifest frailties of Mr. Ed Meese and the historical treatment of America's blacks and Indians. Would the White House take such a gambit in silent good humor?

And quoting Reagan's announcement that "We view human rights as fundamental, absolutely fundamental, to our relationship with the Soviet Union, *as with all nations*," *The Guardian* said: "The last four words are the litmus ones. They mean, if they mean anything, that American military aid and political succor to President Zia of Pakistan are on hold today after the peremptory sacking of the civilian government. They mean that the government of Guatemala is shivering in its boots this morning, waiting for Washington to lower the boom. They mean that President Botha of South Africa can expect sanctions after all and that Saddan Hussein of Iraq is in deeper trouble than he knows."

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ARTICLES.

PRETORIA'S IRON CURTAIN—I

Silencing the Dissenters

GEORGE BLACK

On Friday, May 20, South African Home Affairs Minister Stoffel Botha, the man in charge of enforcing the regime's emergency regulations against the press, stood up before Parliament to condemn what he called foreign "media terrorists." He made a point, however, of exempting CBS. Botha singled out a "letter of apology" from the network's news president, Howard Stringer, which "regretted that it had not been meticulous in complying with South African procedures regarding foreign media" in its making of last December's controversial documentary *Children of Apartheid*.

Stringer's undertaking of good behavior is the latest in a stream of failures of nerve and principle by the U.S. press and television in South Africa, which have been widely and deservedly criticized—for example, by network producers Danny Schechter (in the March-April issue of *Africa Report*) and Richard Cohen (in the June 6 *New Republic*). Sadly, the myopia of U.S. reporters has extended to the predicament of their colleagues and counterparts inside South Africa, especially the journalists who write and edit the country's smaller newspapers, variously referred to as the alternative, progressive or emerging press. ("Our last contact with reality," novelist Nadine Gordimer called these threatened papers on a visit to New York City last month.)

The survival of the emerging press has been at risk since August 28 of last year, when the regime decreed new media laws under the state of emergency that has been in force continuously, in one form or another, since July 1985. The regulations gave Stoffel Botha arbitrary powers that are virtually exempt from judicial review. The sentence pronounced on dissenters is no longer a single, highly visible knockout blow but a slow death by a thousand cuts. Any newspaper judged to have published material "promoting or fanning revolution" or threatening "the safety of the public" or "the maintenance of public order" is subject to a series of three ministerial warnings, the last of which can be followed by suspension or prior censorship.

American reporters' interest in the situation has tended to reflect the degree of "credibility"—always an elusive concept—that each publication enjoys in the United States. So the greatest attention has been paid to the dilemma of South Africa's best-known opposition paper, the liberal *Weekly Mail* (warned twice but still publishing), which is well connected in the West. On May 16 *The New York Times* gave space on its Op-Ed page to *Weekly Mail* co-editor Irwin Manoim; many reporters, with good reason, have come to regard Manoim and his co-editor, Anton Harber, as reliable sources. Moving down the scale, one or two consciences were pricked by the closure in March of the Catholic Church–owned *New Nation*. The paper's editor, Zwelakhe Sisulu, is a well-known figure in the United States, having spent 1984 as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. (He has spent the last year and a half in a South African jail.) But the silencing on May 9 of *South*, a weekly backed by European church funders, was like a tree falling in the forest.

It was far from clear whether either of the two banned papers would be able to reopen after the state of emergency came up for renewal on June 12. Temporary closures mean hefty lawyers' fees, loss of advertising revenues, loss of sales and income. The editors and lawyers for *The Weekly Mail* were also uncertain what their position would be after June 12: Would their first two government warnings, issued in December and April, be carried over to the new emergency period? Or would Minister Botha have to go back to square one? Then again, would the government devise new and more ingenious forms of legalistic torment after mid-June?

There are also a host of smaller and more vulnerable papers whose difficulties have barely caused a blip on the international radar screen. *Grassroots* and *Saamstaan*, for example, are community-based papers in the townships of the Cape. Put out by activists with direct news of local people and events, they are less professionally polished in their journalistic techniques, more keyed in to the political needs of the opposition United Democratic Front (U.D.F.). Then there are the more specialized journals and periodicals like *Work in Progress*, which focuses on labor struggles, and *Out of Step*, the publication of the End Conscription Campaign.

For Stoffel Botha, this whole cluster of opposition news sources is a hostile force. "A journalist with a poison pen," he has said, "contributes as much to the revolution as the man with a hand grenade." He has hinted strongly that one of the government's goals in squeezing and vilifying the emerging press was to drive a wedge between it and the mainstream dailies, some of which are potentially sympathetic—on a collegial if not a political basis. "I sometimes wonder," Botha told the House of Assembly, "whether the honest proponents of journalism in South Africa are not at some stage or other going to disassociate themselves from their negative colleagues."

Eric Goldstein of the New York City–based Committee To Protect Journalists detects a careful strategy here. "The government has drawn a small circle," he says, "inside which lies 'acceptable' political activity and speech. Everything outside is simply 'revolution' and 'media terrorism.' The government has been trying to reassure the country's mainstream media that they have nothing to fear from the offensive against the emerging press, because the crackdown has nothing to do with press freedom. As usual, the government is playing divide and rule."

The attacks on the smaller township papers—ranging from legal harassment to mysterious office fires and the detention of staff reporters—go hand in glove with the

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sweeping February ban on seventeen antiapartheid groups, including the U.D.F. Papers like *The Weekly Mail*, and to a degree *The New Nation*, enjoy the limited protection of foreign—and some local—pressure. But the smaller alternative papers, Anton Harber comments, "have less of a profile, so the government can move against them more easily. A key factor in giving us breathing space was the flood of letters of protest, even interventions by prominent local businessmen. The tragedy was that there was so little reaction to the closures of *The New Nation* and *South*." The even-smaller township publications like *Saamstaan*, he adds, "have faced more repression, more intimidation and had less protection than anyone else. And they are incredibly brave and outspoken; they do things nobody else would do."

The publishers who can afford to defend themselves have gone the legal route, hiring lawyers to out-argue the government in court and expose the inconsistencies of the law. The problems in that approach became apparent in March, when an appeals court judge, ruling against *The New Nation*, pointed out, as one might to a slow-witted child, that its lawyers had failed to grasp what they were up against: "It is not so much a failure to understand the regulations as a failure to understand that [your lawyer] was dealing with the opinion of a politician and not the judgment of a court of law." In other words, the press is dealing with the exercise of arbitrary power. Or, as the judge explained more picturesquely, "Censorship is like a guillotine. And there is very little use growing honeysuckle up against the guillotine."

Just *when* the guillotine will drop is what has become so unpredictable. There was always a line in South Africa, and the function of state power was to stop dissenters from crossing it. Now that line has been made invisible; risking an act of dissent is like tackling a crossword puzzle from which the numbers, the black squares, even the clues have been removed. The new press laws are an exquisite form of psychological pressure, all hedged around with the appearance of punctilious legality, due process and the sagacity of a "board of experts" appointed to help Stoffel Botha identify "objectionable" material. They employ, as Irwin Manoim wrote, "criteria too secret to divulge."

And too arcane to predict. Look, for instance, at the list of articles cited by Minister Botha in his warnings to *The New Nation*: a photograph of African National Congress leader Oliver Tambo; a poem titled "To My Son"; an article headlined "Arsonists Strike at U.D.F. Offices" ("in so far as it refers to the police"); or another, "New Fear Grips Hambanathi" ("in so far as it reflects the 'unwillingness' of the police to act"). But apparently stronger meat—prominent features on the A.N.C. and the U.D.F., sharp criticism of government actions in Mozambique and Angola, news of insubordination and desertions in the military—can often pass without official protest. "Even if we sit down and say what we do to please this man," Anton Harber says of Stoffel Botha, "we don't know how to. His list of complaints is full of contradictions, full of oddities."

That, of course, is exactly the point. Botha is engaged in a war of nerves, immensely debilitating, excruciatingly drawn out. Most insidious of all, perhaps, it is a conflict whose contours and drama are hard for an outsider to read. It may appear as if nothing (or at least, nothing of major news value) is happening. The South African regime has based its tactics, at least in part, on its knowledge of the proclivities, and the weak points, of an adversary it would very much like to neutralize—the U.S. media.

American editors, reporters and news executives have defended themselves against critics by citing the necessary trade-offs that are involved in keeping one's work permit or visa during the state of emergency. The South Africa story, they tend to add, is no longer the stuff of dramatic headlines and shocking film clips: on one side, erupting townships, mass rallies and spontaneous street violence; on the other, the tear gas and birdshot, the dogs and water cannons and rhino whips. But that was the story two years ago, not today. The war in the townships, the quotidian struggle of black South Africans, has moved on to a new stage. The media, by and large, have not—even though, as both Richard Cohen and Danny Schechter point out, the U.S. networks have ready access to independent video sources inside South Africa, the visual equivalents of the emerging press.

At the end of March, the editors of *The New Nation* circulated an open letter on their closure. It commented, with some sadness, "The *New Nation* staff was discouraged to learn the story of our banning was buried in the North American press. . . . The lack of overseas coverage can only encourage the government." The relative news vacuum of recent months has attracted other, blander images—the erosion of petty apartheid, joint endeavors between black and white entrepreneurs, the miraculous separation of black Siamese twins by a multiracial team of surgeons in Soweto, an enlightened new regional diplomacy that depicts Pretoria as a peace-seeker and honest broker of the conflicts in

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Angola and Mozambique. For the moment, then, Pretoria is riding high in the war of words, and its courageous independent journalists are the latest to fall victim. □

PRETORIA'S IRON CURTAIN – II

The Peace Talk Propaganda Show

MICHAEL MAREN

In 1984 South African Prime Minister P.W. Botha journeyed to the border town of Komatipoort to meet with Mozambique's President, Samora Machel. The two men signed a pact known as the Nkomati Accord, under which Mozambique agreed to stop harboring guerrillas of the African National Congress in exchange for Pretoria's agreement to end its support for the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) fighters who had been terrorizing the people of Mozambique for more than seven years. In the photos that were taken that day, Machel is smiling meekly, looking stiff and uncomfortable, while Botha appears triumphant and supremely at ease. Once signed, the agreement was honored by Mozambique and disregarded by Pretoria, which had never truly considered ending its support for Renamo.

For South Africa the meeting was an end in itself, part of an ongoing public relations campaign. Diplomacy was the goal, not the means. And Botha got what he had come for – a photo opportunity with an African leader.

Now another regional initiative from Pretoria has put South Africa on the front pages as party to a diplomatic effort, rather than in its usual role as the racist oppressor. Once again the South Africans are enthusiastically pursuing peace negotiations with Angola and Mozambique. And once again Pretoria has no intention of giving up anything.

Two rounds of talks have been held so far on Angola, first in London in early May and then in Congo in the middle of that month. The first session was attended by representatives from the United States, Cuba, South Africa and Angola. At issue was the presence of some 40,000 Cuban troops in Angola, South Africa's support for Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Unita) rebels and, for the Angolans, an end to South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia.

Then, at the end of May, Pretoria and Maputo agreed to revive the Nkomati Accord. This time South Africa has not only promised to abide by the accord but stated that it might be willing to assist Mozambique in defeating the guerrillas.

The Mozambicans have no reason to believe that South Africa will honor the pact any more now than it did the last time. Similarly, Angola has every reason to believe that once South Africa gets what it wants, it would not hesitate to violate any agreement that might be reached. That both countries are willing formally to enter into an agreement with an enemy that has total disregard for international agreements is an indication of just how desperate their situation has become. Both Angola and Mozambique have seen their economies destroyed by South African–sponsored insurgencies. Renamo in Mozambique and Unita in Angola have both been well schooled in the art of economic sabotage. Their targets have been roads, bridges, markets and farmers. A recent State Department report on Mozambique says that at least 100,000 civilians have been killed in cold blood by Renamo in the past two years. Fear has paralyzed the country.

Pretoria's "offer" to Mozambique arrives only after continued support for Renamo had become untenable. Several independent reports have documented Renamo atrocities in Mozambique. The most damning criticism comes from the State Department, which likens Renamo to the Khmer Rouge. With Washington moving clearly to the side of the Mozambican government in the conflict (despite the best efforts of Senators Jesse Helms and Bob Dole and a number of conservative organizations to rally support for Renamo), South Africa, too, decided that the time had come to be on the correct side of the issue – or at least to appear to be.

But most of the attention and optimism has been focused on the Angola initiative. Barred from almost every international forum, the South Africans relish the opportunity to be seen as participants in important discussions. At the Congo meeting South Africa was represented by two of its most prominent Cabinet members, Foreign Minister Roelof Botha and Defense Minister Magnus Malan, in an attempt to inflate the importance of the talks.

Press reports from the diplomatic front have served Pretoria's and Washington's interests, portraying a cooperative South Africa, flexible and willing to negotiate with Cuba and Angola. On May 14 *The New York Times* reported that the presence of Malan and Roelof Botha at the Congo meeting "was seen by Western diplomats as an indication of Pretoria's willingness to reach a peace accord." Those "Western diplomats" were certainly not from Western Europe.

Official U.S. optimism was also headlined on May 5 and May 20 in *The Times*. Other newspapers followed suit. Only *The Christian Science Monitor* made a point of emphasizing how unlikely it would be for South Africa to compromise. In fact, Pretoria has offered nothing new. Before the London talks Foreign Minister Botha reiterated that, "as far as South Africa is concerned, the talks are going to be about Cuban withdrawal," not about Namibia.

Many reports of the situation have accepted the South African–U.S. premise that it is the presence of Cuban troops in Angola that presents an obstacle to peace in southern Africa, and that their withdrawal is what is at issue. This is the line that the Reagan Administration and South Africa have taken for the past seven and a half years. This policy, called "linkage," has been rejected by every country in Africa and all of America's European allies, except for the Thatcher government in Britain.

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Much of the day-to-day reporting from southern Africa tacitly accepts these assumptions by endowing the various forces in the region with a moral and political equivalency. Typical of this was a May 31 article by James Brooke in *The New York Times* titled "Outsiders Stoke the Angola Civil War with Men, Weapons and Bases." (Indeed, like much reporting from Africa, the piece took an "ain't it all crazy" approach to the entire situation.) The article was filled with anecdotes about the participants in the Angolan conflict—the Cubans, the Soviets, the Angolans themselves, Unita, the South-West Africa People's Organization, the South Africans, the A.N.C.—as if they were all guests at some cosmopolitan cocktail party. No distinction was made between invaders and defenders.

Before the Moscow summit, *The Times* twice editorialized that Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev should make southern Africa a priority at their meetings. But implicit in this call was the acceptance of linkage, as well as the notion that the United States and South Africa represent the West, while Angola and Mozambique are part of the Soviet bloc. Such a framework for negotiations presumes that there are two sides to the questions involved, each with legitimate interests that need to be protected. To accept that interpretation of the regional conflict is to award the ultimate victory to Pretoria's propaganda campaign. A better alternative would be for the United States to abandon the policy of appeasement that has been carried out under the label of "constructive engagement" and join in the multilateral efforts to pressure and isolate Pretoria.

The Russians, as a diplomatic gesture, have offered to play a role in settling the conflict, possibly by acting as guarantors of the peace—although it is far from clear how they could accomplish this, short of sending their own troops to replace the Cubans. In their post-Afghanistan euphoria, however, U.S. officials have interpreted Moscow's conciliatory stance as an opportunity to lean on Angola and Cuba, once again casting the Cubans as the problem.

But South Africa's refusal to leave Namibia has been the main obstacle to peace in the region: Namibia is the issue and South Africa is the problem. The Cubans arrived in Angola fifteen years after the struggle to free Namibia began, and they are anxious to leave—as soon as South Africa stops supporting Unita.

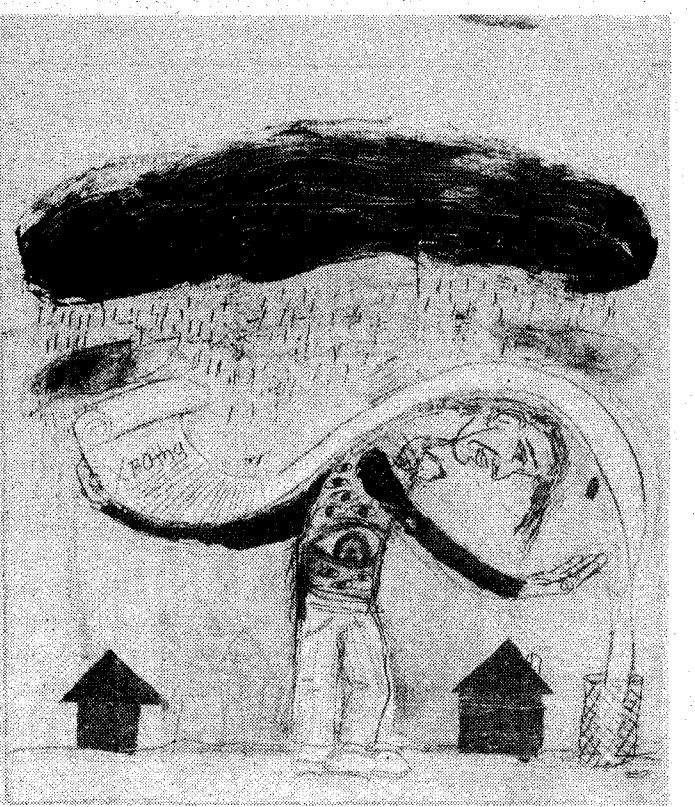
South Africa knows full well that Angola can ill afford to send the Cuban troops home so long as the South African Army is poised just across its border, in Namibia—not to mention having a free run of most of southern Angola. By insisting on Cuban withdrawal as a precondition for Namibian independence, Pretoria has doomed the talks from the beginning. The sides are so far apart on this most basic issue that in a normal diplomatic environment the meetings would never even have taken place. But the weakened Angolans have little choice but to accept South African offers to negotiate—to be props in a diplomatic sideshow that South Africa is using to draw attention away from the issue of apartheid.

In addition, the survival of apartheid depends on the continued destabilization of Mozambique and Angola and the occupation of Namibia. Any agreement freeing Mozambique and Angola from the grip of war would release other southern African states from South Africa's economic stranglehold and place apartheid itself on the front lines. There is no reason to suppose that a Cuban withdrawal would end South Africa's destabilization efforts.

Pretoria's apparent willingness to negotiate has been greeted enthusiastically by Washington because it offers the hope of redeeming the Reagan Administration's failed and ridiculed southern Africa strategy at the eleventh hour. Pretoria has a stake in making it appear that constructive engagement gets results and that linkage presents a viable strategy for achieving a settlement. Its hope is that the next U.S. Administration will continue present policy or adopt a similar position.

The peace talks that are being staged now cast the United States as neutral and South Africa as a regional peacemaker, when in reality the Reagan Administration's interests have become inextricably intertwined with Pretoria's determination to assure its own security. The South African diplomatic strategy has been little more than an effort to change perceptions of the issue, not the situation in the region. By accepting South Africa's rhetoric at face value, the press has assisted Pretoria in setting up this smokescreen.

The timing of this diplomatic assault is a direct result of Pretoria's success in blocking foreign coverage of its internal strife, and of the consequent quieting of international opposition to apartheid. That was graphically illustrated earlier this year when Pretoria sharply curtailed the already limited rights of the black majority by banning more than 650 antiapartheid organizations [see Maren, "White Mischief," *The Nation*, March 12]. Two years ago the interna-



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tional community would have responded with protest and outrage. This year the reaction has been barely audible.

Taken together, Pretoria's 1988 diplomatic maneuvers and the devious Nkomati Accord of 1984 appear like parentheses around the world's three-year obsession with South Africa. Now again, as in 1984, Pretoria is dictating the terms of international debate and prolonging the life of apartheid. □

HARD LABOR IN CHINATOWN

How the Other Half Lives Now

PETER KWONG AND JOANN LUM

Contrary to the popular image of Chinese-Americans as upwardly mobile professionals, Mary Chen of New York City is not a Westinghouse Award winner or a television news anchorwoman—she is a Chinatown garment worker. Her husband, Jim, is a waiter in a Chinese restaurant. Mary and Jim (pseudonyms) work sixty hours a week for Chinese bosses in jobs that pay poorly and lead nowhere. They live with two children in a run-down Chinatown tenament, part of the 30 percent of the Chinese population of 1.2 million in the United States that is working class.

Many in this country believe that the Chinese prefer to stick together to help each other "get ahead." Chinese employers encourage this impression. One vice president of a Chinese-run garment factory near Chinatown says that his firm employs a "Hong Kong management style" in which "we treat the workers as family." Some owners do tolerate flexible hours so that workers can pick up their children from school, or they permit preschool kids in the shop where their mothers work or allow women to work at home. But after extending this self-serving generosity, owners oblige employees to accept conditions that violate basic American labor regulations.

In the restaurants of Chinatown, most waiters and waitresses work twelve hours a day, six days a week, and receive only $200 a month, counting on tips to survive. They are not covered by health insurance, have no paid holidays and work under unsafe, hazardous conditions. Wing Lam of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association, an advocacy group in New York City, contends that "the most exploitative situations are found in Chinese-owned businesses. People exploit their own kind."

Options outside of Chinatown are not readily available to Chinese immigrants. For those without education and knowledge of English, Chinatown is the logical place to start. As they settle in, immigrants have little chance—and little incentive—to learn English, because everyone around them speaks Chinese. Many European immigrants at the turn of the century were also confronted by the language hurdle; what is different about the Chinese and other immigrants today is that they come at a time when the availability of industrial and unskilled jobs in the United States is shrinking drastically. And the new jobs being developed are in high-tech and service industries for which literacy in English is essential. When Chinese without marketable skills look for jobs outside Chinatown, they are competing with other minorities in the lowest-paying and most-depressed industries, whose workers suffer from the constant threat of unemployment.

This situation puts Chinese owners in a strong position. And American society, comfortable in its belief that the Chinese have their own way of doing things, reinforces the owners' power by ignoring the goings-on in Chinese communities. Through their control of clan associations and secret fraternal organizations, the owners have become the Chinatown establishment. Among other things, they determine the rules of management and labor relations. Fearful of being blacklisted or physically threatened, individual workers do not challenge the order of things.

The only way for Chinese workers to improve their lot is by organizing. But mainstream unions, which have failed effectively to represent the interests of minority workers in general, have not responded to the plight of the Chinese. Typical is the attitude of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. Hotel and Restaurant Employees and Bartenders Union, which claims that Chinese restaurants are difficult to organize because they are so scattered and the workers so alien. As a result, only ten of the 1,400 Chinese restaurants in the New York City area are unionized; and half of those have actually been organized by the Chinese themselves through independent unions.

While Chinese waiters have been frustrated in their attempts to form or work with unions, their counterparts in the garment industry have been organized by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. In New York's Chinatown more than 22,000 garment workers belong to Local 23-25 of the I.L.G.W.U., but these women are not reaping full benefits from their membership. The union negotiates a new contract with Chinese factory owners every three years. In the one that expired May 31, the minimum wage for machine operators was set at $5.40 an hour for a thirty-five-hour week, with time and a half for overtime. Many shop owners ignore these provisions. Some workers say their bosses change piecework rates daily so that employees cannot keep up with the confusing calculations used to determine their wages. Chinese garment workers rarely receive the national minimum wage, let alone the union minimum: On average, they work ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week, and earn only about $9,000 a year.

Union officials insist that violations in organized factories are not serious. According to Edgar Romney, manager of

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Local 23-25, "Some union shops are violators of union contracts, and some are violators of laws, but I wouldn't call them sweatshops. They may be crowded and unsafe and dirty, but the fact remains that they're paying minimum wages and benefits." The union says workers themselves are partially to blame. "There are many more violations in shops than we are aware of. It would be good for workers to come to tell us more," says Barry Gewen, Romney's assistant. And Gewen insists that "if a worker files a formal complaint, we always follow through and enforce the contract rigorously."

The truth of the matter is that before the workers will come forward and complain, they must have more confidence in the union. Most Chinatown shops were organized in the mid-1970s, when the owners agreed to unionization in exchange for a promise that the union would help commit large manufacturers to providing Chinese contractors with a steady supply of orders. Chinatown factories, then, were unionized from the top down, without any worker involvement. The I.L.G.W.U. has since made very little effort to involve the workers on individual shop floors, even though most of them are new arrivals and unfamiliar with the laws of this country. In fact, many factories have no shop representatives to whom workers can report their grievances (despite a provision in the union contract that makes the union responsible for appointing one in every shop). Local 23-25 business agent Alice Tse claims that "most Chinese are not willing to be representatives." Without shop representatives, the business agents, the union's overseers of individual shops, become the only presence of the union in the factories. A common complaint, expressed in a letter to the editor of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association newsletter, is that "the business agent rarely visits our shop, and when he/she does, he/she never talks to the workers." In some factories the I.L.G.W.U. business agents get along better with the owners than with their own members. This is not surprising, since the success of the union is based on its ability to maintain a dues-paying membership, and that depends more on the cooperation of Chinese factory owners than of the rank and file. This being the case, the owners' power is dominant in the factory, and workers cannot be expected to risk retaliation from their bosses and betrayal by union officials.

The union's indifference has emboldened the owners to try getting away with more blatant violations. Mary Chen described a unionized factory where she worked until she was recently fired for having requested a few days off for union meetings. According to Chen, that company uses a piecework rate that averages out to about $4.75 an hour, below the contract guarantee. She also says that the firm regularly punches in workers' timecards at 9 in the morning, even when they actually start work at 8, and checks them out at 5 in the afternoon, even if they stay until 7. According to Chen, the managers also force employees to work through lunch hours and harass those who refuse to work late or on Saturdays. And curiously enough, the shop is not even discreet about violations. When we visited the factory, a sign, stamped November 30, 1987, was posted by the time clock, informing all that: "Working hours are: 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Don't work beyond these times since no overtime will be paid!!!!"

When we inquired about this apparent failure to comply with the contract's overtime pay provision, the business agent who monitors this particular factory said he was not allowed to give interviews. He referred all questions to his supervisor, who, claiming previous bad experiences with the press, would not talk either.

Instead of fighting such abuses, the I.L.G.W.U. has tried to shift the blame for conditions in the shops to cheap foreign imports, high rents in Manhattan and the growing number of illegal workers. Implicitly, the union justifies its weak enforcement of contracts with the fear that a strict reading would put Chinese owners out of business. But it is not clear that the threat is real. Although Chinese contractors constantly complain about their loss of business, dozens of help-wanted ads for seamstresses appear every day in the city's Chinese-language newspapers. The owners' complaints may simply be a ploy to force the union to accept lower wages in its contracts. Moreover, Chinatown factories have been doing well in recent years because of the low value of the dollar—in fact, some Hong Kong garment factories have recently set up shop in New York. Evidently, they believe that even with the higher wages in this country they will profit from employing modern production methods and locating closer to their retail markets.

Whatever problems the garment industry faces, the I.L.G.W.U. should not be solving them by allowing contract violations. The lethargic attitude of the union has allowed working conditions to deteriorate. In the same letter to the editor quoted earlier, the writer claims that in her factory "90 percent of the work is done by workers at their

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homes." Those working on garments at home—which is illegal—are members of Local 23-25. A Chinese seamstress from Hong Kong to whom we spoke works for a Chinatown factory on her Brother sewing machine at home in Harlem. According to her, the owner of the factory helped her fill out forms for union membership; she therefore receives medical benefits and can use the union's health care facilities. Obviously, the business agent for that factory has made no effort to check on working conditions.

Contracts are not enforceable if union officials do not get the rank and file involved. Members must be educated and mobilized to watch for, report and make a fuss over violations. If the union shows itself to be truly committed, the workers will back it up, as they did in the summer of 1982 when 20,000 Chinese garment workers turned out to demand that their employers agree to a new contract providing for across-the-board wage increases. On that occasion, the Chinese owners underestimated the potential militancy of the Chinese women. They did not expect them to respond to an "American" union's call to demonstrate, thinking that the women would avoid confrontation with the Chinatown establishment. Even union officials did not expect the protest. But the Chinese workers showed that they know where their true interests lie, despite threats and appeals for "ethnic solidarity" from the owners. Alice Tse, a workers' leader at the time, expressed the sentiments of many of her compatriots when she said at one rally: "We cannot accept any treatment that is inferior. Chinese workers are people too! . . . If we cooperate and stand together behind our union, we will win!"

Alas, the union did not use that historic breakthrough to consolidate its support among the rank and file. While some members have become more active in the union since 1982, officials have generally reverted to a passive attitude. One staff worker for the I.L.G.W.U., who asked not to be identified, says that "the conditions in the shops are the same as they were in 1982" and that some violations, such as the failure to pay overtime, have become "institutionalized." She reports that workers who've toiled in the industry for more than a decade complain that conditions are worse now than they were ten years ago. Furthermore, the percentage of unionized Chinese shops in New York is declining. Five years ago 95 percent were organized, according to Katie Quan, an I.L.G.W.U. organizer; today many Chinese shops have moved to the city's outlying boroughs to escape unionization. If this trend continues unchecked, the union's very survival will be at stake.

The I.L.G.W.U. has a proud history of leading generations of new immigrants in a fight for decent wages and working conditions. Unfortunately, that history is now buried under an ossified bureaucratic leadership. Even young, sincere and dedicated union activists are unable to move this dead weight.

The I.L.G.W.U.'s present crisis is not unique among modern American unions. In the postindustrial economy all of them have to make drastic changes to broaden their membership and regain the support of their existing rank and file. The I.L.G.W.U. could be an effective force in its industry if it would stop making excuses and start doing more shirtsleeve organizing. It must be more aggressive about going into nonunion factories, no matter how hidden away those are. Michael Weber, a journalist and former I.L.G.W.U. organizer, suggests that "there's hope for the union if the union activates its membership and puts them on the streets."

Particularly important for the union's future is the mobilization of isolated ethnic enclaves, such as New York's Chinatown. Exploitative underground economies have mushroomed in these communities throughout the country, and unions should reach out to them. In Chinatown, the I.L.G.W.U. could help shake up the powerful alliance between Chinese owners and the feudal power structure that is set against the workers. As Wing Lam of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association puts it, "Chinatown's got to be forced open." To organizer Quan, this proposition would require "an immense amount of work on the part of the union and on the part of the rank and file, with the cooperation of the U.S. and state departments of labor." The enormity of that task, contends one observer, is "tantamount to making revolution." If the union does its share, not only will its membership benefit but the union itself will be revitalized. It will also have made a real contribution to integrating a closed ethnic community into American society, fulfilling the dreams of thousands of immigrants who come here seeking economic well being, social justice and human dignity. □

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Le Pen Country

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

can't miss it: Posters of the leader are plastered all over with the now-obsolete stickers "Le Pen – president." On the left-hand side there is a symptomatic kitsch painting: A priest with a holy cross is exorcising a devil painted in red. So that the point should not be missed, the devil has 1789 – the date of the French Revolution – scribbled on his back. The bar's owner, Dedé (short for Andrew), a man well known for his exploits with fists or gun, is well in line with the painting: "It's the Alamo here. Only instead of being on the defensive, we shall attack." Then, changing periods and metaphors: "Charles Martel [who stopped the Arabs near Poitiers in the seventh century] – that's kid stuff. It's from here that the great anti-Islamic crusade will start." The customers, who look like a bunch of aggressive salesmen, nod approvingly. If the National Front attracted only such reactionaries, nostalgic for the King, Pétain and French Algeria, the threat would not be too great.

To measure its seriousness I have to go to the other side of the Old Harbor, beyond the seventeenth-century Town Hall, where the Socialists are still the masters, to a warehouse that had been turned into offices and plastered with portraits of Le Pen with or without a tie. There I meet the local leader of the National Front. Sixtyish and paunchy, Pascal Arrighi is one of the reactionary notables who rallied to Le Pen. A former high-level public servant, he is a clever politician and a smooth talker. Why does his party do well in this area? In addition to economic circumstances, there are two basic reasons – immigration and "its daughter, insecurity." Marseilles, he claims, is a hospitable city, but the Arabs are just too much. When I venture that the arguments used to explain their otherness – different race, different religion, they don't mix or intermarry – had been advanced to oppose Jews before the war, he weighs me up suspiciously then decides to play it safe: No, the Jews had "the gift of adaptation and the will to integrate," whereas the Arabs are unbearable. He takes me into his confidence: "A cousin of mine, a doctor, her name was not in the telephone book, but they found it to shout obscenities because she had refused to sign phony certificates for social security. They just get on everybody's nerves."

When he talks of local politics, the man can be quite witty. I asked him why he was so sure that candidates of the respectable right, the followers of Jacques Chirac and Raymond Barre, would stand down for National Front men and vice versa, whatever the official orders from Paris. Because they don't want to commit political suicide, he replied: "On the fourth floor, faced with the choice between the window and the staircase, you obviously can jump, but. . . ." Dedé is there for Arab-bashing and Arrighi for vote-catching – the Front, after all, is doing well here in both posh and popular districts – but when it comes to fundamentals their message is the same. It panders to the lowest prejudices and plays on the deepest fears, seeking the ultimate root of all evil in the outsider, the alien, in this case the Arab.

Mohammed the Scapegoat. Next to the names of National Front candidates on the billboards there are small posters. With a minaret in the background and a quotation: "In 20 years' time, it is sure, France will be an Islamic republic." It is not worth checking whether the Hezbollah leader to whom this is attributed really did make such an absurd forecast. All foreigners combined account for less than 7 percent of the French population, a proportion that has remained roughly stable for the past dozen years, and immigrants from North Africa represent 2.6 percent. Besides, it is estimated that only some 5 percent of the potentially Islamic population are practicing Moslems. But to give credence to such forecasts is no more irrational than the often-heard suggestion that if you want a job, a subsidized flat or a place in a kindergarten, you had better be called "Ben-something" than Dupont. This kind of whispering campaign is universal; only here it is unusually successful.

Is it because foreigners are so much more numerous here in Marseilles? Not really, since according to the 1982 census, they number 80,752 – or 9.3 percent of the population; immigrants from North Africa, estimated at 56,784, account for 6.5 percent of the total. Admittedly, they are more visible, since the immigrant ghetto lies in the center of the city. The district stretching between the Canebière and the railway station with its monumental staircase, full of narrow

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s Europe correspondent and author of* Is Socialism Doomed? The Meaning of Mitterrand *(Oxford University Press).*

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streets and shady hotels, has always been a shelter for the poor of the planet. By now it has expanded and looks like a North African casbah. Arabs are thus to be found not only on the outskirts in the most overcrowded and derelict housing projects but also in the very heart of the town. On top of it all, there is the population afloat. The port of Marseilles is the main transit place and provisional stop for North Africans entering or leaving France.

Yet one cannot attribute the political explosion of racism to some optical illusion. Having once gone to school here, I can testify that Marseilles is an ethnic patchwork, the nearest thing to the United States with its successive waves of immigrants. The Arabs come after the Spaniards, Armenians and Greeks on the solid foundations laid by the Corsicans and, above all, the Italians. In 1931 foreigners accounted for a quarter of the town's population, so to talk now of a "threshold of tolerance" is nonsense. Besides, the proportion of foreigners has not grown perceptibly in the past seven years, during which the National Front has climbed from marginality to political pride of place in this city. To understand this rise, racism alone is not sufficient explanation; it is necessary to glance at the deeper crisis of this town, of its living conditions, its economy and its system of power.

La Rose in Concrete. The eighth electoral district of Marseilles, picked by Le Pen to test his strength, is a mixture of popular and middle-class sections. You can reach it by the new modern subway, getting off at La Rose station, the end of the line. Outside you have blocks and blocks of flats. Indeed, as you reach the suburbs of Marseilles you are struck by a series of high-rise, cheap housing projects, which have grown like mushrooms during the building boom. Those at La Rose are not among the worst and therefore not packed with immigrants. Yet here as elsewhere there are no cultural amenities, and community spirit has vanished. The blue- and, increasingly, white-collar workers feel insecure, worried about travel in their evenings, about their jobs, about the future. Marseilles seems to be surrounded by a concrete wall of crumbling expectations.

Experts on the spot confirm what is written in the few studies on the subject, namely that Marseilles has mismanaged its economic modernization. It is not just that the harbor was affected by the end of the French Empire; this was partly compensated for by the development of oil traffic. Marseilles failed to build an industrial hinterland, to diversify beyond its traditional activities connected with the harbor, or with the soap, oil and food manufacturing industries. The failure was concealed for a time by the building boom, linked with the jump in population – from 660,000 in 1954 to 882,000 in 1968 – spurred partly by the return of French settlers from North Africa. But beneath this bustle, the local bourgeoisie, satisfied with petty speculation, missed its opportunity during the postwar transformation of the French economy to more capital-intensive methods of production. Or, to be more accurate, the chance of regional expansion conceived of in the late 1960s through the Fos complex (i.e., petrochemicals and a steel industry based on imported ore) came too late. The "miracle" was over and the vast plan got bogged down in the international crisis.

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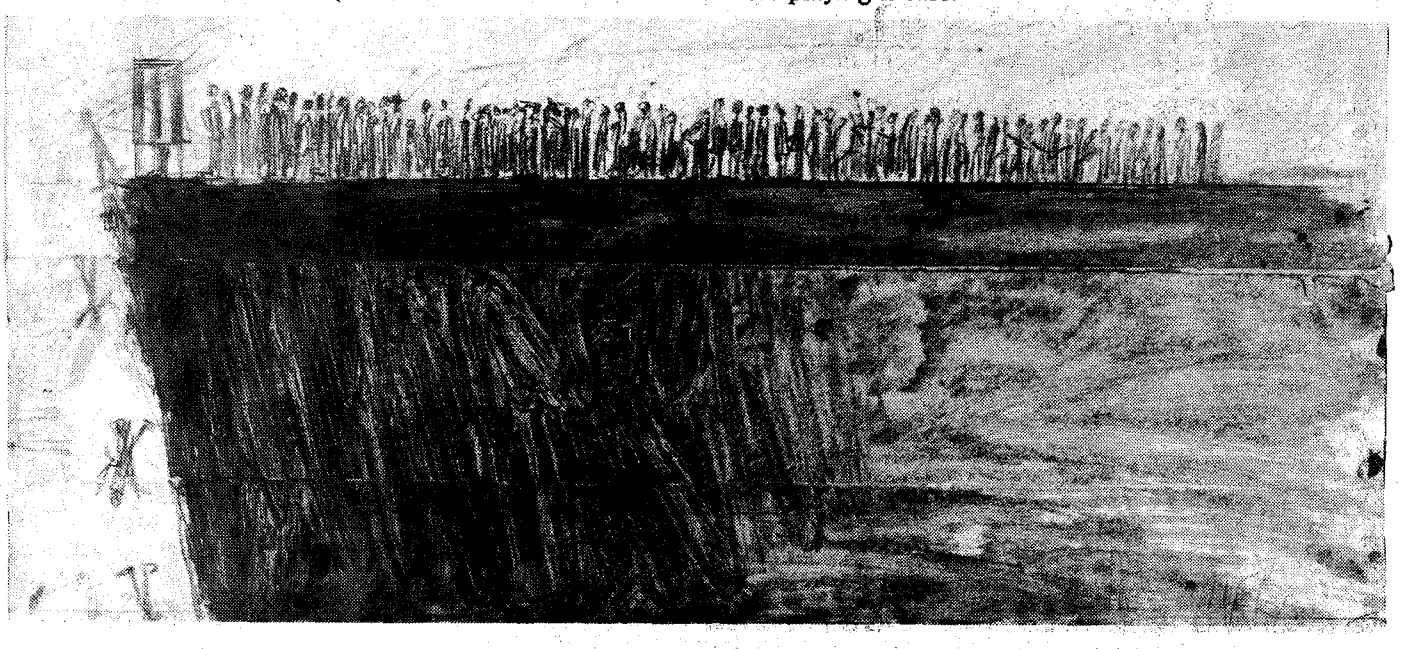
As a result, Marseilles is a town whose population is dwindling and where industrial jobs are declining – a very partial explanation of the collapse of the local Communist Party, whose electoral strength declined in seven years from 25.8 to 10.9 percent. White-collar employment has not expanded sufficiently to compensate and is, on the whole, on the lower end of the pay and status scale. Marseilles, lagging behind the national average in higher or technical education, is well above it in unemployment. The North Africans, brought over during the boom years, particularly for work in the construction industry, provide their contingent of the jobless. The economic deterioration goes a long way to explain the melancholy mood of this town and coincides with the end of one man's political reign.

In Search of a Godfather. On arrival in Marseilles everybody tells you that this month's parliamentary elections are merely skirmishes for next year's big municipal battle, which will determine the choice of the new godfather. This mafia analogy is disrespectful – if not entirely unfair – to the Socialist Gaston Defferre, a well-off Protestant lawyer from neighboring Hérault who dominated local politics throughout the postwar period. He was Mayor of Marseilles for thirty-three years until his death in 1986, but his system lasted for thirty; it was set up in 1953, when, fearing a Communist takeover, the right – except for the Gaullists – made an alliance with the Socialists. The pact was based on the assumption that the bourgeoisie would get the profits and the Socialists the patronage. Thus, town planning, for example, was entrusted to the right, which explains the social segregation that has seen the poorer people driven from the city center to the new high-rises of the periphery. The Socialists were in charge of the allocation of lower-rent flats and also controlled jobs provided by the municipality and the harbor. Indeed, they turned the network of power and patronage into a fine art; hence the passion in the present struggle for the Town Hall.

Strained by the economic and social crisis, the pact collapsed under the impact of national politics. Defferre could not sit in government in Paris (where he was Minister of the Interior) together with the Communists and at the same time rule in Marseilles in alliance with the right. In 1983 he chose to fight the municipal election with a popular front. The two big parties of the respectable right, determined to defeat him, based their campaign on law and order. To their surprise, a completely unknown list called Marseilles-Security captured more than 5 percent of the poll. The way in which not only the right but the Socialists too wooed this jingoist electorate between ballots was one of the most shameful pages in the S.P.'s history.

While Defferre survived by the skin of his teeth, his system was in ruins. In the European elections a year later the National Front made a triumphant entry with 21.4 percent of the votes cast, grabbing support from all sides. In the parliamentary elections of 1986, which unlike this year's were run through proportional representation, it climbed to 24.4 percent, while the left, once an overwhelming power in the town, was reduced to about 40 percent. Le Pen's score in this April's presidential poll thus marks a steady rather than a spectacular advance. The swing is no longer from the left but from the classical to the extreme right. The loser is Jean-Claude Gaudin, the conservative bloc's crafty leader, rather than its strongman. He thought it clever to be elected president of the regional council with the support of the National Front, then to take neofascists as his assistants. He simply rendered the Front more respectable. With 28.3 percent of the poll, Le Pen won more votes in Marseilles than Chirac and Barre combined.

It was this showing that induced Le Pen to seek his fortune here. Yet he was taking quite a gamble. To get a parliamentary seat, let alone the Town Hall, Le Pen, who got 33 percent of the poll in the first ballot, on June 5, required the backing not just of some but of all the supporters of the respectable right to stand a chance of winning. Had we reached that stage, the situation would be desperate, which it is not. With Le Pen faltering, the Socialists will now present as their candidate for mayor Michel Pezet, the man who won the skin game for Defferre's succession. But they were playing it safe.



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Le Pen was not the only "parachutist," as carpetbaggers are called in France, in this area. Bernard Tapie, the handsome tycoon and media personality, landed in Marseilles with the Socialists' blessing, promising to cure unemployment. That this capitalist champion of "restructuring" should be one of the few cases of *ouverture* is symptomatic. Come to think of it, Mitterrand's "opening" is really the Defferre system writ large on a national scale, a Socialist alliance with the bourgeoisie, with the respectable right renamed the "center" for the purpose. This will be the test in next year's municipal elections. In the polarized world of French politics, it will not be an easy one, either in Marseilles or the rest of the country.

The Thermometer and the Epidemic. I have written so far as if Marseilles were an island. Admittedly, this volatile port has some unhappy precedents: Simon Sabiani and his gangsters controlled the city in the early 1930s, and the Gaullist Rally at its worst conquered the Town Hall in 1947. But today Marseilles has ceased to be so distinctive. It has the same disease only in stronger or more advanced forms. It is not even very much ahead of the trend in the Midi. The electoral map of southern France now looks pretty ghastly. Le Pen got a quarter of the vote in the regions around Marseilles, Nice and Toulon; a fifth in the Avignon, Nîmes and, further west, Perpignan areas. The greater success of the National Front in the southern regions is partly due to the presence there of French settlers from North Africa – adding to French racism their own anti-Arab brand – and possibly to a greater fear of European integration. But nobody likes to be squeezed in the name of economic progress, or to call "modernization" what is perceived as unemployment. Le Pen has reached close to 10 percent support in Brittany, for instance, where there are no foreign workers. The disease has become national.

What Marseilles does reveal is how the National Front has grown, and the timing of its growth. The economic crisis and a good number of immigrants were not sufficient on their own. The left had first to get into office – on the one hand to madden the right, and then, on the other, having failed to keep its promises, to disappoint its own supporters. It was in 1983-84, with those two preconditions fulfilled, that the National Front took off. Then, in the past two years, the respectable right had to get back into office and confirm its own inability to cope, giving a new boost to the Front.

Historians will probably describe this period as the end of an era for two major movements – the Gaullist Party, which had managed to harness the authoritarian trend of the French right, and the Communist Party, which had furnished hope and the semblance of a solution to left-wing protesters. Consensus politics will not exorcise the Front. If the crisis and unemployment continue, as they are likely to, and no section of the left provides a radical alternative, Le Pen has quite a future ahead of him.

Is this forecast not too gloomy now that the share of the National Front in the total vote has gone down from over 14 percent to less than 10 percent, and the party has been virtually deprived of deputies? No. A movement whose growth is so recent and which lacks well-known figures was bound to lose some ground in an election where local personalities matter, while the disappearance of deputies is purely the effect of a change in the electoral law from proportional representation to a winner-take-all system. The danger now is that those who have altered the way one reads the thermometer may convince themselves that the disease is cured. Yves Montand, the brilliant performer who now seldom misses the chance to say something politically silly, argued the other day that one cannot describe as fascists the people with whom he plays *pétanque* on the Riviera. Jackboots somehow do not fit into Pagnol's country.

But serious trouble does not begin when the men with jackboots or with cloven hoofs opt for fascism. It begins when the tinker and tailor, your neighbor and your cousin, are driven sufficiently mad by circumstances to vote for an admirer of Pinochet, a preacher of apartheid, a man for whom the gas chambers are a mere "detail." As I looked down from the steps of the station, on departing this outwardly still-warm and attractive town, I could not help feeling that moral pollution is not so easily perceived. All the more reason to probe below the surface, to sound the alarm and, above all, to seek a cure – unless we want to wake up one day, too late, in a fully contaminated city or country. □

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EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 846*)
shelters. We are all too aware of the demoralizing and humiliating experience of living in shelters. Not one damn penny more.

Chris Sprowal
President
National Union of the Homeless

WAKE-UP CALL

Boston
Theresa Funiciello's "Give Them Shelters" provided a clear, compelling and forceful challenge to our nation's response to homelessness. In Massachusetts, safe, affordable housing has become a scarce commodity. Rents are increasing at 30 percent a year, while housing production falls short by 10,000 units per year. Aid to Families with Dependent Children grants languish at levels far below the poverty line, and for many homeless individuals no income program exists at all. Yet the solution doesn't lie in opening shelters, which at best are only a Band-Aid on deeper wounds. We must affirm and insure that every individual, every family, has a right to decent housing and adequate incomes. We must affirm and insure that we seek to build housing, not shelters.

It's no surprise that Funiciello's article creates disturbance and unhappiness among providers and advocates for the homeless. No one welcomes the alarm clock each morning; but both the clock and "Give Them Shelter" are telling us something essential: It's time to wake up.

Sue Marsh
Executive Director
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless

WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Albany, N.Y.
My hat's off to you! Theresa Funiciello's article "Give Them Shelters" is clearly a matter of fact that is long overdue. Last year, as a member of the New York State Assembly and the Legislative Women's Caucus, I had the good fortune of working with Funiciello, a fellow assigned to the caucus.

As stated in her article, Funiciello worked tirelessly to develop and market among legislators a plan that was clearly one that would convert resources from shelters to resources for permanent housing. A public hearing and later discussion concluded that the plan was in fact legal and do-able. After all was said and done, I concluded that all that was absent was the will to move to implement the plan.

Through all the meetings, and finally the public hearing, it was evident to me that there was a reluctance to acknowledge that some advocates for the homeless had, in fact, become the administrators of this horror story.

I believe the intentions of some of the advocate organizations are noble indeed; however it appears that they have bought into a solution to homelessness that has proliferated the bureaucracy and the cost. It appears that, maybe unknown to the nonprofit organizations, the solution has become part of the problem. I wholeheartedly agree with Funiciello's analysis of the dreadful homeless dilemma. I also applaud her for having the guts to state the facts so boldly and succinctly.

Barbara M. Clark
New York State Assemblywoman

FUNICIELLO REPLIES

Woodstock, N.Y.
No substance is not enough. From on high, the "gang of seven" and Robert Hayes assert that my article threatens the poor. Didn't the past twenty years of backlash take place already, on the heels of strategies proposed by some of those whose names appear above? Aren't *Nation* readers worthy of serious criticism, or have the stars of social policy become so arrogant they expect their names alone to carry them? The irrefutable bottom lines:

§ No "balance" currently exists between shelter and housing development. In a good year, less than 10 percent of what is spent on shelters and hotels in New York State will be devoted to permanent housing for the homeless. Of the remaining 90 percent, a good chunk will go to the shelters of Hayes and his board members.

§ You can't build shelters any faster than you can permanent housing.

§ To harp on real estate interests as the ultimate problem is a waste of time. The National Housing Act of 1937 recognized that the private sector did not and would not produce housing for the nation's poor, thereby making the state the appropriate locus of discussion.

Apparently my critics think I shouldn't have named names. Had I written anything about Mayor Ed Koch and Meade Esposito, however, no outrage would have been voiced. Then again, the only potential beneficiaries of my whistleblowing are the poor, primarily in female-headed, single-parent households. The more powerful and affluent seven disingenuously claim—without any countervailing evidence—that if my assertions were true, they "would want such matters exposed." Not one of them was even present as the policies I criticized unraveled through the Homeless Housing Assistance Program (H.H.A.P.), so how can they presume to challenge facts about which they have no direct knowledge?

The fact is that power relations changed when Governor Mario Cuomo took office in 1983. His rhetoric of compassion and the election delivered a mandate to address the homeless. He brought a number of people, such as Travers, into state government to do the job. A Task Force on the Homeless was set up that included Doyle, Hopper and Hayes, among others, as advocate advisers to carve out the homeless program and other initiatives. These people were not pawns but the vanguard of the South Africanization of New York, however "sensitive" they appear. The actual and provable fact is that the people I named enhanced their careers through the development of shelters, purported to speak for the homeless, misrepresented their interests repeatedly, and did so with impunity, although occasionally out of ignorance. Given the imprimatur of the Governor and the press, armed with a barrelful of options and millions of dollars, they chose shelter development over housing development. A barrage of other policy choices followed suit that made matters even worse.

For it is not in the rhetoric, grand schemes and sometimes legislation itself that the poor are screwed. It is, more often than not, in the details responding to the former, behind closed doors. It is not enough to validate summarily every expenditure of the welfare state—notwithstanding the political desires of the gang of seven—especially if the poor get hurt in the process.

For example, Travers ultimately approved the Doyle shelter proposal discussed in my article in spite of negative evaluations by each of the staff members who reviewed it. As proposed, the shelter would have been out of compliance with family shelter regulations then being drafted in Albany because the rooms were so small. Instead of requiring more space or fewer people, Travers took on the task of excising standard space requirements from the regulations, in part by arguing that New York's poor, 95 percent of whom are black and Hispanic, were used to tight living quarters. This proposal was finally killed by black community leaders in Bedford-Stuyvesant who had become aware of the abomination about to be dumped in their laps. Nevertheless, to date, "tier two" family shelters are the only form of licensed residence that dictate no minimum square footage per person at all, eclipsing even jail cells in this sense.

H.H.A.P. is beginning to redirect some resources toward permanent housing due to the efforts of some of Travers's own staff and principled advocates who have had to drag her every step of the way. But they have yet to crack the big nut—conversion of per diems for shelters into housing dollars—primarily because of the persistent and irrational opposition of Travers herself.

As for the work of the Coalition for the Homeless on permanent housing, the seven missed a tad. In 1986, when the first opportunity in years presented itself for some national housing legislation, the coalition sprang into action. It sought support for the McKinney Act, with Hayes leading the charge. It was passed by Congress and hundreds of millions of dollars were appropriated—pri-

(*Continued on Page 876*)

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Wall to Wall at Walden

JANE HOLTZ KAY

Winter becomes Walden. In late season, the pond lies gray under a cover of ice. The sun colors the smudged hills and the pines stand silhouetted against an orange sky. Peace prevails at Henry David Thoreau's holy waters in the lonely hours of winter's solitude.

In summer it is otherwise. From June to August, another Walden comes into being. On sunny days, the shores of the pond are jammed with bathers, 130,000 by last summer's end, almost ten times the population of the town of Concord, Massachusetts, where it is located. "I want to go soon and live away by the pond, where I shall hear only the wind whispering among the woods," Thoreau is quoted in a park brochure. But the sound of silence vanishes with the summer's boom boxes. Body to body, beach towel to beach towel, the blankets stripe the edges of the sacred shore. Like heraldic banners of our culture, the towels wind from the eastern beach and bathhouse round the whale-shaped pond toward the cove where Thoreau set up housekeeping on July 4, 1845. The too-vivid path, the chatter, the abrasive sounds of stereos echo the conditions that affront pilgrims and confirm conservationist complaints.

The sense that Walden is under assault has a history as long as this century but the litany has become louder than ever lately and summer brings its clamor to the fore: The Japanese are coming, the Indians are coming, the Americans are coming. The spiritual journey to this shrine and sanctuary has no adversaries. But the other invaders do. For together the swimmers, and the authorities who ease their way with formal paths and intrusive public works, are marking the end of Walden's naturalness, its heritage.

Tearing through the woods, circling the heights, ringing its 1.7-mile perimeter, the swimmers will soon begin their annual onslaught. They will sweep away the fragile ground cover of pine needles, heel aside the banks nearer to the edge, expose the roots of aging oaks and, as a finale, send the soil to cloud and kill the water.

"In wildness is the preservation of the world," Thoreau wrote, but in truth the Walden evoked in Thoreau's classic of life in the woods is becoming harder to imagine. Once Walden Pond was encircled by a path no wider than a moccasin. Now visitors have pounded out a six-foot-wide walk to Thoreau's cove. Hard as asphalt in some places, it is more like a city sidewalk than a path in Ralph Waldo Emerson's woods. Once, clumps of red maples and vegetation crept to the water. Now much of the greenery is gone along the shores of Walden Pond and the edges are propped with woodsy artifacts. One public parking lot is jammed; so is another officially off-limits lot that holds additional visitors. As for the wider Walden Woods that Thoreau walked, less than a quarter of them, a mere 411 acres by the state's count, are saved; and, on the ring just paces beyond, development planned by Mortimer Zuckerman's Boston Properties threatens to transform the gateway of the protective Walden Reservation into a corporate green belt. There will stand an office park—an artificial and commercial symbol, the ultimate rebuttal of Thoreau's notion that "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone."

Is the holy lake and symbol of Thoreau's quest for the natural life to disappear? Is Walden to become merely a watering hole, a municipal pool for the burgeoning suburbs of Boston's Route 2 corridor? This is not an issue exclusive to Walden. In this era of the vanishing wilderness, it is a question asked elsewhere: For whom and how shall we preserve and use our natural resources? But Walden is without peer. This pleasant if unspectacular sixty-two-acre kettle pond on the edge of Concord is a shrine and sanctuary for literary reasons: If *Walden* is the Koran of conservation, Walden, zipcode 01742, is its embodiment. No parallel tract or body of water or place has so captivated the human imagination or so taught us how to relate to the natural world from which we spring. Nowhere else is there a literary memorial and monument of such breathtaking consequence. In a world devoid of symbols and a landscape almost uniformly for sale, Walden is an international shrine.

But the special irony here is this: A heightened consciousness and concern for Walden Pond's condition seems to have developed just as the state has begun to look for an answer to the site's erosion and to correct decades of blatant abuse there by overbeautifying. Since 1975, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the state's caretaker of the pond, has replaced a grim bathhouse, demolished a concrete pier better suited to seaside honky-tonk, and planned for the demise of a nearby trailer park. It has spent $2 million to reshape paths, replant an especially scarred section of Walden's slopes and brace the pond's sliding edges. Finally, just last spring, the state began to prepare a master plan for the future of the property.

And yet with all that, the crowds and the controversy have grown. The argument between advocates of recreation and supporters of a quieter sanctuary has intensified. On the one hand, swimmers and fishermen shut off from the polluted inner-city beaches and the ever-more-private shoreline want access. On the other, the naturalists who worship Thoreau's stewardship of the planet, the political followers who bow to his "Civil Disobedience," and a legion of admirers all want to enjoy their reverie in peace. The peopled silence of a winter visit seems to suggest they can coexist. But that is illusory. Finding a midway between active recreation and meditation begins to seem impossible, far more complex than Thoreau himself could have foreseen.

Mary Sherwood is not one to see such complexities. The zealous protector has been relentless in her vision of the pond as preserve. At 82, this founder of Walden Forever Wild has taken the extreme protectionist position and dug in. After decades of literally rooting around in the soil to save Walden, she has uttered the final solution: Ban swimmers. Fence in Walden Pond. "Heartsick" at what she saw as the destruction of the pond, Sherwood told last July's Thoreau Society forum on Walden Pond that the only protection from deterioration was "to chain-link" the portion nearest busy Route 126. Plant flowers to prettify it, she said, but keep out the crowds.

The state has seen otherwise; so have swimmers, observers from *Sports Illustrated* and partisans of Thoreau's wide-

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ranging freedom afoot. The Massachusetts Audubon Society refused to endorse her message. Even the environmental watchdog Conservation Law Foundation asked "Why at this juncture?" with a mixture of disbelief and annoyance at this negative response to renewed state toil.

Sherwood is not reluctant to concede that she, too, was "horrified" at first by the idea of fencing Walden, but she has no inclination to recant. Given a sandy soil susceptible to mere footprints, given waters unfed by brook or stream, one incision and Walden Pond bears a scar of long duration, she says; one pollutant and the malady remains. Walden, as her colleague ecologist Edmund Schofield of the Arnold Arboretum confirms, is not some sturdy water hole but a glacial kettle hole lacking topsoil to hold its slope or springs to refresh its waters. And the state, contrary to its mandate, says Sherwood, has overformalized the edges and overcrowded the place. There were "more mobs than I ever saw before" this past year, she says, anguished at the state's laissez-faire policy toward swimmers and walkers. The mounting numbers and easier access wreck not only the pilgrim's mood but the physical existence of Thoreau's memorial.

Mary Sherwood not only talks about Walden Pond, she orchestrates its salvation seventy hours a week. A letter-writing and petition-gathering campaign that might have launched a presidency has gone forth from two tidy rooms lined with books, maps, a braided rug and a donated Canon copier covered by a paisley towel. Some 4,000 signatures have come from forty-seven states. Sherwood's labors have netted a blue cardboard box filled with letters from Thoreau followers, scholars and conservationists.

The Thoreau Society has grown (it now has 1,800 members), but the pond has declined, and never more so than in the years since 1980, when crowds have multiplied. "At present, in this vicinity, the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom," Thoreau himself wrote. "But possibly the day will come when it will be partitioned off into so-called pleasure grounds, in which a few will take a narrow and exclusive pleasure only – when fences shall be multiplied, and man-traps and other engines invented to confine men to the *public* road, and walking over the surface of God's earth shall be construed to mean trespassing on some gentleman's grounds," he prophesied. "To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it. Let us improve our opportunities, then, before the evil days come." The statement might be the clarion call of the conservation movement.

Thoreau, like scripture, can be quoted by devils and deities alike and, as Walden consciousness has grown and the Walden Forever Wild message has spread, the state itself sent out the above quotation to bolster the notion that Thoreau himself would not fancy any such fence.

"Recreation," too, is a word of many meanings these days, and is controversial in itself. America has long defined the word "recreation" as asphalt playing fields and basketball courts – as "active recreation" entailing, for instance, the hardtopping of picturesque Frederick Law Olmsted parks. Now, however, America is rediscovering "passive recreation" and vistas, is learning that scenic or natural "recreation" is at least as valid a refreshment for the spirit. Thoreau, after all, did not go to Walden to swim Olympic laps or take Aerobic Hut-Building.

Although Thoreau's mandate may be now up for grabs, his "evil days" came earlier than the 1980s. Thoreau's winter Walden could be noisy. It resounded to the digging of Frederick Tudor's ice choppers, who were carting off Walden's frozen waters for the iceboxes of Boston. Moreover, in a densely farmed New England, Concord, with its population of 2,000, was not wilderness. Some of the hills near Thoreau's cove were bare from logging; the sound of axes rang through the Concord woods at any season, he said. The railroad – at once intruder and agent of civilization – rolled by the western elevation en route from Boston to Fitchburg, as it does today, "visible on its newly-made embankment from any point," he wrote. By the Civil War, in fact, crowds were coming out on that railroad to the summer Picnic Station to visit Walden's pleasure park, which opened in 1866; city dwellers fled the urban heat for dance halls, lecture platforms and boating. On the busiest days, 500 to 1,000 came from Boston.

Even these facts are up for interpretation nowadays, however. To state supporters of active recreation this chronology means that Walden always was and hence should stay a public playground, while to Walden Forever Wilders or conservationists like Tom Blanding, it confirms the opposite. A Thoreau scholar and eloquent heir, Blanding finds the

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state's use of Thoreau against Thoreau "sophistry." Walden Pond's tortuous history, like Thoreau's, is merely an indictment of a world not ready to adopt his lifesaving values, Blanding feels. Walden Pond always was the turf where commerce and the state warred against the naturalist's quest to plumb nature's quiet depths for the true soul of humankind, and in his eyes, Walden remains what the world needs now for survival.

To this Thoreau scholar, Walden is a symbol of our lives. The water is the primal renewer and Jungian mirror. The cairn—a heap of stones piled one by one by visitors into a peak of remembrance near Thoreau's former cabin—is the truest monument. Even a seagull, the ultimate urban garbage bird, takes on a lyric grace as we watch it soar across the pond. Meanwhile, the artificial boardwalk, the wood cribbing to bolster the banks and the other physical incursions by the state seem sacrilegious to this testament to nature.

Whatever the periodic loss of tranquillity and the debate on Walden's outlook in the generations before and after Henry David's two-and-a-half-year stay, talks with Blanding and others prove another fact: The damage to Walden and Walden Woods was slight before our day. John Quincy Adams, longtime member of the Walden Pond Advisory Committee and active conservationist, remembers taking a dip there with his brother but nary another soul in sight in 1913. The warm water, the bullfrog tadpoles and, later, some gypsies on its banks stay in his mind. The early twentieth-century Walden was pristine enough to prompt Emerson's heirs to bequeath their 83.4 acres there to the state in 1922. With the gift went firm instructions to maintain the tranquillity, allowing picnickers, bathers and fishermen but keeping it true to the time of Emerson and Thoreau.

All sides agree that the relative stability of Walden changed in the 1920s with the coming of the automobile and the Middlesex County Commissioners. "By that time, it was beginning to get out of hand," says Adams. Under a corrupt county administration, Walden fell into its most derelict state. Roads grew around it, especially Route 2, which slammed through Walden Woods in 1935. A decade later a town dump opened and Walden Breezes trailer park filled a lot a stone's throw away.

It took the massive destruction of the so-called Red Cross Beach in 1957 to rouse the national followers of the bard of Walden. During the annual meeting of the Thoreau Society, a band of admirers as diverse as its hero finally responded to an alert. Told of the county's destruction of 200 oaks and pines and the dumping of tons of topsoil and forest humus into the waters of Walden to dredge the Red Cross Beach, the society members trooped out to Walden to inspect the damage. "The group is exquisitely outfitted for militancy," *The New York Times* commented. "It meets just once a year, listens to some 'papers' and then breaks up into bemused solitaries marching off to Walden, each to the sound of a different drum. But the sight of those hell's acres of dusty death spurred the society's members to appoint a committee to demand of the county commissioners why this obvious and senseless violation of the agreement to preserve Walden had occurred."

A Save Walden Committee suit soon followed. Three years later, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruled that the commonwealth was obligated to maintain the pond with no change to "the physical aspect, character and appearance of the shores and woodland, as seen from the pond and its shores." Finally, in 1974, the state actually took hold, agreeing to limit the visitors to 1,000, down from annual peaks of 12,000. Under environmental enthusiast Governor Francis Sargent, the Walden Pond Advisory Commission was formed, parking restricted, the trailer park bought and the bathhouse remodeled. Although the next administration, that of Governor Michael Dukakis, oversaw a shrinking in staff, it did begin improvements: In 1980, Mary Sherwood took over the task of replanting the brutal scar of the Red Cross Beach and finished four years later.

For all this revived concern and the improvements cited, the state's real restoration work at Walden dragged and swimmers got more leeway and access to wooded areas. Overall, Walden drifted until two years ago, when one of Mary Sherwood's stream of letters landed at the headquarters of the Conservation Law Foundation (C.L.F.) on Boston's Joy Street. It was the catalyst. "When Mary Sherwood started barraging me, I finally started looking into it," C.L.F. lawyer Richard Emmet acknowledges. "I was shocked at the commission; I was shocked at the state still in the planning stage, the numbers still not under control." A letter went out from the C.L.F.

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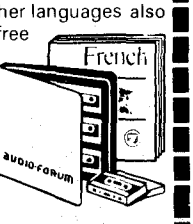

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calling the work done by the Department of Environmental Management "negligible" and chastising the state for the increase in "self-made trails" and the unconfined swimming that added to the erosion. The next summer, restoration work on the banks began in earnest. So it has continued.

On a cool gray afternoon just after Labor Day, I head to Walden to see the progress of this restoration. The state's lanky and thoughtful landscape architect Stuart Weinreb unhitches the pond's motorboat to take me to the center of Walden's universe. "It's a great way to see Walden," says Weinreb. Swinging from the eastern beach, the farthest point from Thoreau's house site, a half-mile across the pond, we pass north surveying the shore. Little of Walden's wildness is left along these edges, as I have seen in my walks. The blight of the cribbing done about thirty years ago to bolster the path for walkers has settled into a state of Hansel and Gretel ugliness. The slopes nearest the place where bathers tread are worn thin. Gullies mark the shore; some trees look ready to topple, their branches lifeless, though others have begun to display fall colors.

"The pitch pines are the pioneers here," says Weinreb. "They tell me that's what happens in a disturbed landscape." We eye another tree, an oak, its roots sticking through the earth like the veins of an old crone's hand. "That's a doomed tree," says Weinreb. During the winter other trees were taken down by the state, "the dead and dying," he says. Then we turn the bend to Thoreau's cove. Weinreb describes the place where Thoreau set up housekeeping as "a real popular spot." It looks scruffy, an amphitheater at the end of the most abused path. Too many people flock here to the sun, as did Thoreau, and to the water. Even the pines just beyond seem to list to the sunny cove.

The boat slides on. We pull westward, just beyond, to survey the work done or almost done toward Ice Fort Cove. Two bright-yellow trucks stand like Tonka toys on the path; a construction crew places the last of several hundred hefty rocks to hold back the tumbling earth. A siltation fence of green plastic lies on the water like a dark-green skirt to stop debris from clogging the pond. Once the rocks are set, the state plans to plant native lowbush blueberries, wild lilies of the valley and to cover the rest with gravel, Weinreb says. The rocks are sturdy, a solution, but also formal, urban, too manicured. "Admittedly, it's a change from the way the pond looked," Weinreb says. "But it's better than erosion." "It's going to be pretty," says Blanding a few weeks later. "But it's not going to be appropriate."

"You have to find a way of satisfying people's urge to get to the water," Weinreb says, "because we know if we don't, people will walk there on their own." Others rebut this. They insist, and rightly, that the negligent town and state should patrol the place and confine the crowds as other beaches do. They question whether Walden Pond should be armored against such invaders with impermeable materials. Prevention is the first line of defense. The pond should simply be staffed to keep the crowds out, they say. The first task – restoration – tallies in at several million. The second – policing – is pricier still and less glamorous. But it is superior. Yet it is an axiom in public works across the country that maintenance is the least likely item to win budgetary commitment. So the state builds and builds. An estatelike formal edge appears, and more paths circle the pond to encourage people – the people Walden doesn't need. And in the end, as Weinreb says, "there is an alteration of the character."

A week later, I call the Conservation Law Foundation for its appraisal. "If I were a dedicated Thoreauvian I would not go to Walden on July 4," attorney Richard Emmet answers after summing up the state's work positively. "And I wouldn't go on a sunny day, but on a rainy day with two boats on the pond, it was delightful."

Delight, of course, is in the eye of the beholder and again Walden Forever Wild folks and dedicated Thoreauvians disagree with Emmet's conclusion: for, despite the state's work on restoring the banks of Walden, it also allowed the numbers of swimmers to swell last summer. Even as the bright-yellow John Deere crews solidified the new paths to ease erosion, more people than ever were allowed to pack Thoreau's "backyard laboratory." And despite a ten-year "essay in diplomacy" to get the apathetic Concord School Committee to forbid parking for 300 cars at their nearby high school, gates were never installed. Thus, in the rainless heat of 1987, more people than ever – over 400,000 – came to Walden, and the odds are they will return. "We did very well last year," says the conscientious Park Supervisor Don Faron, when asked for a crowd count. "We attracted more visitors when other parks didn't," he goes on proudly, right after we finish talking about the troubles of overvisitation. "It's the old management thing," says Mark Primack, head of the Greenspace Alliance and a former Metropolitan District Commission manager. "More is better." Like the notion of growth as progress, it is an idea that runs disastrously deep. "You don't see much of Thoreau here," says Primack.

This is what galvanizes Mary Sherwood. True as ever to her style and convictions, Sherwood is hard at work collecting signatures and planning to turn Walden into a sanctuary. To some (and the bard of Walden not the least among them) it is the last resort: a Thoreau museum. To others, it is the only answer.

No question, however, Sherwood's legion grows. Just this month a new umbrella group called the Thoreau Country

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Conservation Alliance held its first meeting. For if Walden is clearly more than Walden Pond – more than a sixty-two-acre body of water surrounded by land – nothing has reinforced that sentiment as much as another issue of development that began to ripple out from its "magic circle" this year: "Walden may be crowded and noisy on summer weekends, but the one nice thing about crowds of people – the quality that most endeared them to Thoreau – is that, sooner or later, they always go away. They may roar, litter, and push topsoil around with their feet, but they do not really ruin woods and water," conservation writer Ted Williams observed in *Sanctuary*, the local Audubon publication. "In the East this most often is attended to by developers," he observed.

"Ruin." "Developers." The controversy generated by a developer at the gateway to Walden has provoked harsh words and deeds. Since last year, when final notice came that the front door of Walden Reservation – or, in the words of the Concord Historical Commission, "the middle" of Walden Woods – would hold an office park, the image of a "walled-in Walden" has prompted a new activism. When the developer, Boston Properties, proceeded to seek and get approval for a "large-scale commercial development on the threshold of Walden" (specifically, a 150,000-square-foot office park at the corner of Routes 2 and 126) tempers rose to a pitch unheard of in this placid town. The notion of this office park, a commercial flagship of "making it in Massachusetts," sitting on Brister's Hill appalled conservationists. Here, where Thoreau hunted huckleberries, took botanical specimens and crossed the hill to reach fresh springwater, developers were about to pave and commercialize 18.8 acres. Protesting lack of notification, the outraged seven-member Concord Historical Commission first tried unsuccessfully to take them to court, then produced a twenty-two-page document including Thoreau's comments on this very site. Their letter quoted the naturalist: "These woods! Why do I feel their being cut more sorely? Does it affect me nearly? The axe can deprive me of much. Concord is sheared of its pride." Yet Concord has ignored its native son's injunction: "Each town should have a park, or rather a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres, where a stick should never be cut for fuel, a common possession forever, for instruction and recreation. . . . All Walden Wood might have been preserved for our park forever."

While the Boston Properties development was treading on especially sacred ground, it also stirred larger concerns about Concord itself. The town, as Concord Museum director Dennis Fiore says, is suffering from "creeping bedroomism." As farms disappear, condominiums cluster and traffic grows, even this passive town sees threats to its historic and bucolic environs. "History isn't a priority in this town," Tom Blanding says. Revolutionary Ridge sports sprawling neocolonial boxes. Highway people threaten to widen historic Barrett's Mill Road, the route of the Acton Minute Men and the British. Fifty acres are up for grabs near Fairhaven Bay, and the West Concord Depot is struggling to survive. Ironically, Thoreau's house itself went for almost $1 million last winter, and the notion of turning it into a scholarly center never made a dent in its fate.

Perhaps the failure of public authorities to stop this private sale is only typical of Concord's negative view of this upstart: of the man who wouldn't pay his taxes so many generations ago and who set Fairhaven Woods afire. "I hear he was a bum," says Blanding. "I swear I've heard people say he stole pies off window sills. Even if they recognize him, there's still something about Henry: 'He was such an oddball,' they say. 'A maverick.'" The sense of Thoreau as an outcast, and of Walden as an outland and a haven of outsiders may obstruct efforts at the pond.

Walden, of course, is a national and international monument. It belongs not to its neighbors in Concord but to all of us. And, as environmental philosopher Garrett Harding has written in *The Tragedy of the Commons*, what is common to all is ignored by all. The Federal government skimps on all its national resources; the state of Massachusetts, beset by the urge to water its teeming masses at this site, blinks while more bathers come. And the lovers of Thoreau? Those on every continent stirred by the majesty of his words, the genius of his prophecy, his advocacy for the natural world are still too silent.

Is there no middle way between Walden as state recreation beach and *Walden* as fenced-in symbol of the balance between the human and natural elements? Can we say no to the multitudes who destroy it in ways more human than a fence? Can we form a con-

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stituency to keep the peace and hence restore the balance between man and nature? If that sounds chimerical, it is still not impossible: Concord and its Historical Commission have become more activist; the Thoreau Society's leadership looks likely to improve; and Mary Sherwood and Walden Forever Wild and the new Alliance are slowly stirring consciences and garnering allies. Let us hope they do so. For whatever becomes of this pond, whatever we choose to make of it, Walden is, in the end, more than a watering hole; it is an altar and testament to our respect for the larger environment. □

The Mating Dance

JENNIFER HOWARD

VIDEO NIGHT IN KATHMANDU: And Other Reports From the Not-So-Far East. *By Pico Iyer. Alfred A. Knopf. 376 pp. $19.95.*

It isn't front-page news, but the United States and the forces of Western imperialism are still entrenched in an Asian war. No bombs fall, no soldiers die, but the conflict intensifies all the same. It is a cultural war in which videocassettes have replaced guns, and tourists have supplanted G.I.s in fatigues. Until the advent of Pico Iyer, a *Time* correspondent turned war correspondent who brings news home from the front, you might not have heard any rumblings of conflict apart from persistent alarms over the trade deficit with Japan.

Video Night in Kathmandu is the account of trips Iyer made through ten countries, during the mid-1980s. Drawn abroad by a desire to see the sights of Asia and its venerable civilizations, Iyer was also curious to find out how "America's pop-cultural imperialism" had affected those civilizations and "to see what kind of resistance had been put up against the Coca-Colonizing forces and what kind of counter-strategies were planned." More than this, he hoped "to discover which Americas got through to the other side of the world, and which got lost in translation."

By admitting that he traveled purposefully to seek out traces of the battle between East and West, Iyer avoids the prevailing winds that currently blow through so much travel literature. Any newsstand offers a sampling of titillating travelogues. "Shop like a Princess . . . dine like a King . . . travel like a Rajah . . . *Traveler* tells you where, when, how and how much!" gloats one of that magazine's subscription ads. Its April 1988 cover promises "Riviera smarts," a guide to "Getting the best out of the Côte d'Azur," as exemplified by a pouty-lipped beauty lounging in unrumpled splendor at a cafe table. No travel stains or Montezuma's revenge here, just a prepackaged fantasy – a relaxing, exotic (but not too) sojourn in a sunny spot that provides exactly what you paid for without much resembling the world you left behind, except perhaps in its creature comforts. Too many mementos of home and you'd feel cheated, too few and you'd feel put out.

For those offended by ready-bought fantasies à la *Traveler*, vicarious foreign jollies can be had in other forms. Take, for instance, *Granta*'s "In Trouble Again," billed as a special issue of travel writing: Voyage, courtesy of *Granta*, into the jungles of Venezuela and do interestingly dangerous drugs; spend a month sojourning among the Afghans; visit the Nicaraguans and preach to them about revolutions.

Iyer will have none of this. Unashamed of his desire to see "postcard wonders," Iyer nonetheless describes them only tangentially, as they bear on his encounters with the attitudes and desires of the East. He drops in a truthful disclaimer to the effect that others have already written about pagodas and pilgrimages more authoritatively than he could. But straight travel narrative was not Iyer's intent in any event, so he shaped the book as a collection of essays rather than a set of verbal postcards, and calls the work "a casual traveler's casual observations, a series of first impressions and second thoughts loosely arranged around a few broad ideas," centered on cultural incursions rather than tourist excursions.

The ambitiousness of Iyer's program would have defeated him had he not made his book an honest record of what one perceptive, self-appointed cultural reporter hoped and feared to find abroad. Like many a sensitive tourist, he left home suspecting that Eastern culture had been sacrificed to Western commercialism. But what if the people of the East *wanted* to be corrupted, to experience firsthand the dirty riches of the West? As Iyer puts it, "Wanting what the East had, the West . . . saddled the East with awareness of what it did not have. . . . Rich enough to go native, the West came East to shed all its belongings, and the East scrambled in the dust to pick them up as they fell."

On the surface, Iyer's encounters with the East and the "tourist culture" justified his fears. On Bali, for example, Iyer found "all the amenities of Eden. Its regally graceful people dwelt in a lush Rousseauesque garden of snakes and tropical flowers. . . . There was no friction in this land of song and dance, and nothing unlovely." But these latter-day Adams and Eves had also developed a canny business sense; they had become expert in dishing up "Authentic American Upper Elk Valley Hamburgers" and "the best chocolate chip cookies east of San Francisco." Yes, Bali might be an Eden, but it had been discovered, and so had become "a common paradise, a collective find and, as such, an insult to the imagination." And Bali aided and abetted the process, for "the visitor to Bali was handed a gift-wrapped parcel of paradise the minute he arrived." Even the sarong-makers and other purveyors of authentic Balinese handicrafts, lucky enough to have avoided flipping Aussie-burgers in a cafe like many of the locals, carried business cards.

Iyer found many of the same conditions in the very different surroundings of Nepal. Hoping to enter in Kathmandu "the last stronghold of the sixties . . . the intersection of hippiedom and Hinduism, where Haight-Ashbury meets the Himalayas," Iyer had anticipated, even desired, a certain Westernization. But instead of finding "a reflection of a younger and more innocent America," Iyer found Nepal so accomplished at adapting to Western tastes that, like Reagan's America, it had abandoned the 1960s in favor of the materialistic 1980s. And the "real" Nepal? Iyer thought he came closest to it when he stumbled into a local home, where some fifty Nepalese gathered around a screen to watch an Indian remake of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video.

And so it went throughout the East. In Lhasa, the marketplace featured a copy of *Best Disco 84 Vol. 2*. In Guangzhou, China, the local bookstore

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carried English versions of *The Idiot* and *Madame Bovary*, as well as *Oliver Twist*, *The Paul Simon Songbook* and *The Ultimate Trivia Quiz Book*. In the Philippines, a band of six Filipinas regaled audiences with a note-perfect rendition of "Material Girl." Even in Rangoon, capital of Burma, that bit of Empire frozen in time, two Burmese teen-agers demonstrated their breakdancing for Iyer's benefit.

Such examples may make it seem that the First World has indeed corrupted the Third, as many believe; or even that the Third World is hustling the First for all it can get. But Iyer ultimately concludes that in fact a reciprocal fascination exists between East and West that goes beyond such superficialities:

> On a grand collective level, the encounters between East and West might well be interpreted as a battle; but on the human level, the meeting more closely resembled a mating dance (even Rambo, while waging war against the Vietnamese, had fallen in love with a Vietnamese girl).

Moreover, he discovered that each Eastern culture, though it might have a romance with things Western, hadn't fallen head over heels for the ethos behind them. "Madonna and Rambo might rule the streets, and hearts might be occupied with secondhand dreams of Cadillacs and Californians," Iyer writes, "but every Asian culture I had visited seemed, in its way, too deep, too canny or too self-possessed to be turned by passing trade winds from the west."

His proof? Things glimpsed down back alleys, on street corners, in dark theaters and on playing fields. From Japan's ability to turn baseball, that quintessential American sport, into the ultimate corporate endeavor, to India's reinterpretation of Western cinematic themes in very Indian terms, the East has successfully translated Western idioms into its own dialect.

Iyer's is a surprising and clever book, one that will frustrate the followers of *Granta*-style travel writing or aficionados of *The Sophisticated Traveler*. Like the lost traveler stumbling on Shangri-La, Iyer has hit on the hidden beauty of traveling in the late twentieth century. You don't have to fork over wads of cash or be snobbishly selective to find something novel; cultural crossover can be as stimulating and as psychically dangerous as a voyage up the Amazon, and very possibly more educational. □

FILMS.

JAMES LARDNER

A World Apart

Ruth First was a journalist who in her youth joined one of the few white organizations in South Africa that opposed apartheid, the Communist Party. Later she reported on the revolutionary activities of the early 1960s, after the African National Congress had abandoned its commitment to nonviolence and when it looked as if, with most of the other colonies on the continent having won their freedom, South Africa's turn might be next. After the government began looking up its enemies, First and her husband, Joe Slovo, fled to England, where they lived for a decade. In 1975 they moved to Mozambique in order to be closer to home and to take part in what they hoped (failing to anticipate, among other obstacles, South Africa's power to subvert its neighbors) would be the creation of a model socialist state.

In 1982, Ruth First was killed by a parcel bomb – a frequent cause of death among exiled opponents of the regime in Pretoria. "When I got the call about my mother's death," her daughter, Shawn Slovo, recently told Lee Lescaze of *The Wall Street Journal*, "it was a call I had long expected – and still expect to receive about my father."

Joe Slovo retired a few years ago from the post of commander of the military wing of the A.N.C., but now serves as the only white member of its executive committee. He is also the general secretary of the South African Communist Party. (The South African authorities like to describe him, fancifully, as a colonel in the K.G.B.) He now lives in Zambia, although I think it is safe to say he isn't listed in the phone book.

A World Apart, which began as a semi-autobiographical screenplay by Shawn Slovo, tells only a small portion of this story. It takes place in a city I assume to be Johannesburg over a period of months in 1963, and it doesn't go into political details. But it tells enough, I would have thought, to absolve it of the charge leveled against it (albeit gently) by Vincent Canby in *The New York Times* a few weeks ago: that it is, along with *Cry Freedom*, "another intensely sincere movie that attempts to cope with the physical and emotional horrors of apartheid, not directly but by dramatizing the toll that apartheid takes on those heroic white liberal South Africans who oppose it." ("The subtext: blacks may suffer, but don't forget the well-meaning whites," Canby added.)

Whatever a liberal is, exactly, in the South African setting, Diana and Gus Roth – the characters based on First and Slovo – strike me as something else. Nor does *A World Apart* make them out to be important figures in the fight against apartheid. Advertisements for *Cry Freedom* described it as "the true story of a friendship that shook South Africa and awakened the world," as if the mission of Stephen Biko's life had been to know Donald Woods. *A World Apart* is an unpretentious, unsensationalistic movie whose focus is not on the society as a whole but on the dilemma of being a white South African and having one's eyes opened, and, more narrowly, on the conflict between political commitment and parental responsibility. The title refers to the apartness of the Roths as white radicals, not to that of their country – although the island-within-an-island aspect of the situation adds to its poignance, as does our knowledge that the revolution in which they enlisted is still trying to get out of the starting blocks a quarter-century later.

Chris Menges, the director, started out working on documentaries for British television. He is also a cinematographer; he shot *The Killing Fields* and *The Mission*. I am sure he was drawn to the subject of *A World Apart* by political considerations, but the film, which was shot largely in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, reflects a determined effort to get things right: the period, the place, the political milieu, the relations between well-to-do whites and their black servants, and so on. A hit-and-run accident early in the film seems to transpire in a flash, as it might in a documentary; and the momentary glimpse we get of a white driver repressing his fear and accelerating out of a crowd of hesitant, nonwhite bystanders gives us more of a sense of the society than any number of stories on the Evening News.

At the beginning of the movie, the Roths are doing a fair job of leading a normal upper-middle-class suburban life, although their 13-year-old daughter, Molly, would rather see more of her parents and hear less (from black servants and visitors) about what brave people they are. Then Gus Roth slips

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off into the night, just ahead of the police. Having a father on the lam makes Molly a notorious figure. Her classmates taunt her by repeating things they must have heard their parents say, like "Why doesn't your father come back and face his punishment like a man? Everyone knows he's a Communist traitor." When a history teacher tries to bring Molly out of a classroom daze by asking her, "Are you with us?" another student pipes up, "No, she's against us." (It's a public school, in which the students learn that the Boer War, "like the American War of Independence . . . was the Afrikaner's fight for the liberty and independence of his country.")

Soon after Gus's escape, Diana Roth is jailed under the ninety-day detention act, and the movie then divides its attention between her experience of that ordeal and her daughter's. Molly can no longer reach her best friend, Yvonne, on the phone. An attempt to visit her (on a fenced-in estate with a sign bearing a picture of a German shepherd and the caption, "I Live Here") sends Yvonne's family into a fit, which ends with the father throwing Molly into his car, driving her home and warning her never to bother them again.

Diana, meanwhile, is put in an isolation cell and given no reading matter but the Bible, the worst form of torture, it seems, that her captors, who consider themselves civilized men (and make a big to-do of their chivalry) can administer to a white woman. "You're lucky we're decent people – we have a feeling for women in this country," a tall, Teutonic-looking interrogator tells her; and, of course, she is lucky, in a way. She's lucky she isn't a black man. The other interrogator, a more cultivated, softer-featured type who assumes the good-guy role, gives Diana a secret stash of books and tries to engage her in high-minded conversation, but she refuses to concede him so much as a tolerant look.

"What do you think of me?" he asks.

"I don't think of you at all," she snaps back.

Unflinching defiance is more than an instinct with her; it's a credo. "Don't cry – not here, not in front of them," she tells Molly when, at last, the family is allowed to visit her in jail.

It is always tempting, with a movie about someone of extraordinary strength, to confuse the valor of the character with the skill of the actor. (Why are Oscars so often awarded to portrayals of noble people?) So I hesitate to say, but I'll go ahead anyway, that Barbara Hershey gives a great performance. The fact that she comes across as a plausible South African is the least of it, although that's no small feat in the generally miserable context of American actors who have been cast – usually for marketing reasons – as citizens of other English-speaking countries. She is equally plausible (and here I can speak with more authority) as a journalist; she even types like one. But her greatest achievement is to show the effort that Diana expends in living up to her standards of behavior under duress. Courage, like violence, is a coin that has been cheapened almost beyond meaning by films. Who can care anymore when – to pick a ridiculous but far from isolated example – Sylvester Stallone remains as impassive as a statue while a column of leeches parades across his deltoids? *A World Apart* puts value back into the currency. Diana Roth is neither beaten nor starved, although at one point she goes on a sort of hunger strike (and – if I am not getting carried away – Hershey herself seems to have fasted for those scenes). The worst thing her captors do is release her at the end of her appointed ninety days and then promptly rearrest her at the phone booth on the corner, before she can call home. It's a quiet knockout of a scene.

The jurors at Cannes decided to split their Best Actress prize three ways, among Hershey; Jodhi May as Molly; and Linda Mvusi as the housekeeper, Elsie, who, we gather, serves as a kind of surrogate mother when Diana is away. As long as they were in such an egalitarian mood, it seems to me that they could have included Yvonne Bryceland as Bertha, Diana's mother, whose rough manner and handsome, weather-beaten face help to fill in the otherwise blank slate of Diana's upbringing. But as good as these other actresses are, the home-front scenes have a vague, generic quality, which holds you at a certain distance. Hershey's scenes jump the gap.

You leave with your head full of Diana Roth, lamenting her fate (which is conveyed in an end-title) and wondering at her determination. "You've wasted your life – you could have done so much," the sympathetic interrogator tells her. Has she? Could some less hazardous form of activity have been more useful? "*Your* friends, *your* work – that's all you care about," Molly says. Is there some ulterior, self-aggrandizing motive operating in this seemingly selfless career? What's missing, it seems to me, are a few of the sort of skeptical observations that Tom Wolfe would have recorded by the bookful if he had been allowed to roam through an interracial party given by someone in Ruth First's circle. Does Shawn Slovo have no worse criticisms to make of her mother than that she spent too much time away from home? There are moments when the film seems inclined to present Diana in a more ambiguous light. A child can be a scathing critic of a parent's inconsistencies. At a party given by the family of her friend Yvonne, Molly looks on with contempt as the well-to-do (and presumably liberal) mother berates a black servant, telling her, "Come on. Chop chop! There are people starving out there!" If *A World Apart* had let us see Diana Roth through those same critical eyes, the result would have been, I think, not to make us admire her less, but to establish more of a connection between her world (with its choices) and ours. That movie might have been better. This one is very, very good. □

THEATER.

MOIRA HODGSON

Speed-the-Plow

Nobody in theater today has a better ear for the language of American business than David Mamet. Relentlessly on the make, his characters are not captains of industry but con men on the fringes of society, trying to batter down the doors of the bank with the only weapon at their disposal – their heads. Sometimes they succeed and fill their pockets, and sometimes they just give themselves colossal headaches. Without exception though, their language is vulgar and funny and charges the air with explosive energy.

In *Speed-the-Plow*, Mamet's latest play, directed by Gregory Mosher at the Royale Theatre, the subject is Hollywood. Bobby (Joe Mantegna) and Charlie (Ron Silver) have been friends for twenty years, ever since they started out together in a corporate mail room. Now Bobby is head of production at a major studio and Charlie is a producer who comes to him with a twenty-four-hour option on a "prison buddy" story starring (or directed by, it's not clear) the immensely bankable "Doug Brown." Bob-

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by, snowed under a deskful of boring manuscripts – including one about radiation and the end of the world by an "Eastern sissy writer" – is delirious at the prospect. "Is there such a thing as a good film that loses money?" he asks rhetorically. "That's what we are in business to do – to make the thing that everyone saw last year!" The only problem is that Ross the Boss, whose approval Bobby needs to green-light a picture over $10 million, is flying to New York City on the company jet and won't be available until 10 o'clock the next morning. This is cutting Charlie's twenty-four-hour option a bit fine.

Mantegna and Silver, draped in off-white suits that look tailored by Bijan of Beverly Hills, are both excellent as two cynical hustlers about to hit the jackpot. (Mantegna's character, the one holding down a regular job, wears his suit with sneakers, no tie and no socks.) "It's lonely at the top," says Bobby ironically. "Yeah," agrees Charlie, "but it ain't crowded." Mamet captures the vernacular perfectly, littering the play with industry expressions and his signature repetitive phrases. It has often been observed that Mamet is a poor-man's Pinter, and it is true that the staccato exchanges are easy to mimic and at times threaten to turn cloying. But the two main actors' line readings are deft and point up the fact that Mamet is an actor's playwright, creating a language which is less simply overheard and recorded whole-cloth than boiled down, crafted and reassembled to create an intense, hyperrealistic theatrical experience. This, after all, is what art is all about.

That being said, the play is far from perfect. Its flaws center chiefly on its third character, Bobby's temporary secretary (played by Madonna). Karen is a semi-naïf who can't find the coffee machine and doesn't even know how to drop her boss's name when booking him a table at a fashionable restaurant. As the first act closes, Charlie says, "She's neither dumb enough or ambitious enough," and bets Bobby $500 she'll never go to bed with him. Accepting this challenge, Bobby shows Karen the sissy-writer's radiation novel; he asks her to give it a "courtesy read" and to file a report on it at his house later that evening.

The brief second scene takes place in Bobby's living room, sparsely furnished with pink curtains, a Turkish rug on the sofa and a Mexican chest which opens into a bar. Karen appeals to Bobby's vestigial noble instincts and convinces him that the movie he should pitch to Ross the Boss is not the exploitative prison buddy picture but the radiation picture. The fact that this scene drags terribly and that Madonna's line readings are less deft than Mantegna's (or Silver's) has something to do with her talent as a stage actress. Still, she isn't all that bad – or if she is, it's hard to tell: The part she's been given is by far the least convincing of the three. Mamet's parts for women have never been the equal of his parts for men: Women in his plays always seem to function more as plot elements, as sources of complication rather than as rounded, living characters. It is difficult to believe that someone as naïve as Karen would actually be working in the movie business, and it's just as difficult to believe that someone like Bobby would be so easily swayed by her, despite her undeniable attractions. (It is also difficult to watch Karen and not keep remembering it's actually Madonna.)

With the second act, and the return of Ron Silver, things go into high gear. When Charlie learns he is about to be screwed out of the chance of a lifetime, that his option on Doug Brown will expire through no fault of his own, his despair and desperation become palpable and even highly moving. All at once his beard grows unkempt and his natty suit seems to wrinkle up as if he's slept in it. Realizing he has only five or ten minutes to salvage his chances, he becomes a caged animal, lashing out with every argument at his disposal. When Bobby says he's going to green-light the radiation book because he believes in it, Charlie replies, "I believe in the Yellow Pages, Bob, but I don't want to film it." He asks Bobby to tell him what the novel is actually about, and when Bobby hesitates, he says, "If you can't put it to me in one sentence they can't put it in *TV Guide*." Our sympathies go out to him because he is totally vulnerable, a two-bit hustler who knows it and isn't afraid to face himself. The prison buddy film is garbage, but what matters above all is loyalty and friendship. Bobby has broken his word.

Speed-the-Plow says nothing about Hollywood that hasn't already been said many times before, but Mamet manages through his language and timing to breathe life into old clichés. *Glengarry Glen Ross* a few seasons back was better, but there is likely to be little else on Broadway this season with his new play's energy. □

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EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 866*)

marily for shelters. I'm not the first to observe that the McKinney Act is the worst piece of housing legislation in the nation's history.

So that Hayes's "commitment" to permanent housing is crystal clear, keep in mind he took a perfectly usable apartment building and turned it into the lucrative emergency housing venture described in my article. For that matter, permanent housing for families has never been the subject of Hayes's rather ubiquitous lawsuits. While he was asleep at the wheel, attorneys working hand in hand with the organized poor in Massachusetts have done what Hayes argued was impossible. They fought for and won a lawsuit for permanent housing.

Hayes has had lucid moments, though. Recently, he told *The New York Times*, "For the past seven years I have been pushing for the creation of a shelter system; the only aspiration now should be to shut it down." Had he made such a colossal error for seven years on Wall Street (from whence he came) he would have long since been out of a job. But because his mistake only affected the poor, who have rarely been able to extract accountability, he remains. Were it not for the grass-roots efforts of the Union of the Homeless, and the efforts of some others, it's unlikely he would have altered his stance.

Saying shelters are faster to produce than permanent housing is pure nonsense. The expedient development of housing is not related to the duration of stay intended for the tenants (unless, of course, tents are preferred). Development is a function of financing, technical skill and political will. Permanent housing can be built just as fast or, all too often, just as slowly as shelters, depending on connections, bankroll, and whether you have the specialized brains to do it.

Nancy Biberman knows. She's in the process of developing a shelter (with H.H.A.P. money, among other sources) that requires mothers whose "presenting problem" is homelessness to agree to submit to specified services. So, if all you want is to get off the streets with your children, then you can't enter this pristine shelter, as is currently intended. In a housing crisis, conditioning the provision of shelter on forced services is at best ethically repugnant.

Funny how both critical letters missed the policy prescriptions in my article. These, of course, would result in significant availability of actual housing and less "need" for shelters. The one "fact" in contention here—that a homestead is distinct from a cooperative—is bizarre, particularly because three of the seven are housing "experts." According to the description in the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development's *Handbook of Programs*, "Urban Homesteading provides cooperative homeownership." I was accurate in calling it a co-op, but the point was missed: that many of the dreadful policies regulating the homeless were the result of the intertwining of Travers and her friends' interests. In any case, it was Travers who referred to it as a co-op in an interesting conversation with me. The dilemma: A relatively affluent group of "homesteaders" commingled with, among others, welfare recipients who sometimes failed to pay rent. The former, whose rents were also low, were in a quandary over whether to evict the rent-tardy members of the "co-op/homestead."

According to Travers, her group periodically issued some kind of eviction notice to the delinquents who would then go to the welfare department for "advances." Trouble is, this practice resulted in the long-term reduction of that portion of the welfare grant intended for such trifles as food, transportation, clothing, etc., as people were actually borrowing against future income. Most advocates argue that rents should be no more than 25 percent of income. But welfare recipients pay in the range of 50 percent. My question of this "cooperative" is, Why weren't rents structured so that affluent tenants paid as large a share of their incomes as the poorer tenants—which might have made the building more solvent and eliminated the recurring eviction predicament?

Finally, to Ruth Messinger, an old acquaintance: It is dangerous (and in this case, personally painful to me) when an "emerging opportunity" makes you deny the truth when you see it. What kind of coalition can be built if the "progressives" come first to the defense of "white slaveholders yearning to be free" (George Carlin on American politics) rather than deal with the shelters as an insidious form of institutionalized displacement purporting to be humane while incarcerating thousands whose only "crime" is poverty?

I am ready any time to debate anyone on the specifics, in the presence of the editorial board of *The Nation*. I believe what was done was unnecessary, immoral and at times even corrupt. Power can be used to advance the interests of the poor, instead of sabotaging them and then hiding behind friends. If my article has done anything, it has exposed an issue that cannot be resolved without being aired.

I'm grateful to those who extended support to me in spite of the obvious political hazards. Paul Goodman wrote, "Harold Rosenberg has said that the most important service that we can perform at present is to expose the scandal of the intellectuals, in the schools, the press, the government, etc., playing along with forces that are senseless." They were both right. *Theresa Funiciello*

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please. Longer letters may be edited for reasons of space.

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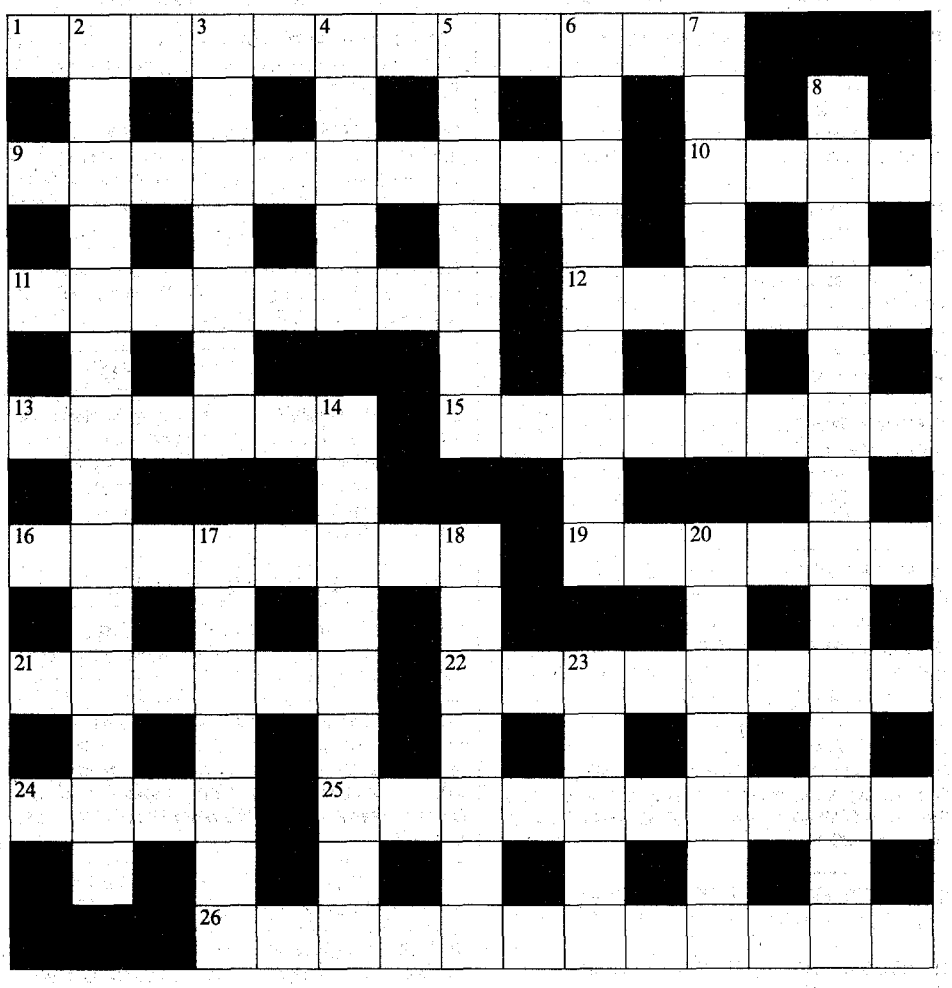
X-523

Crossword Puzzle No. 2202

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Anile for the tower, or us for the ground—or just a woman who hangs around the soldiers? (4,8)
9 Although suitable around the waist of a gingham dress, it's quite a stretch for some Southerners. (6,4)
10 Dodgers might be showing ever-changing form. (4)
11 Sounds like more than one simple fruit could cause disease. (8)
12 Green, to a point, but the following players don't! (6)
13 The bookkeeper's doesn't necessarily belong on the shelf. (6)
15 Little George and I, in a different form, make an effort to show what the school subject might be. (8)
16 In making up Latin, "umbra" might be valuable. (8)
19 Rioted during an outbreak, according to the news man. (6)
21 Candy for the British, one of which might describe 7 down. (6)
22 The back gets overgrown with weeds. (Private here, though.) (4,4)
24 Be he this, one is certainly big! (A fly-by-night, of course.) (4)
25 Alias Rice, now perhaps labeled a Communist, he made quite an important discovery. (4,3,3)
26 It's a complete shut-out, one from Connecticut supposedly being saved by it. (5,7)

DOWN

2 Make up for certain mountains, properly speaking, with what a lover pitches softly? (That's how the eagle takes the hare.) (2,3,4,5)
3 and 17 What one might be doing on the green with the slug of liquor is now an Olympic contest. (7,3,4)
4 Evidently this sort of cat has only a little weight. (5)
5 In Confederate circles there was evidently some meaningful glances made this way. (7)
6 It's a bad tear in the complete thing, which one might look for in the desert. (5,4)
7 12 sort of comes around five, which might be part of the evening. (7)
8 They should know the number of violin players in Germany and warn of impending danger. (6,8)
14 With a little more sense, getting up, and with very little money, you could start a revival with such things. (9)
17 See 3
18 Concerning certain conflict, if it were not upside down, this would relate to the bride and groom. (7)
20 Is the king dramatically coming up with one particular people? (7)
23 The first and last letters, etc., when sorted, could be Indian. (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION

Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail falling into the suffocating arms of a Rev. Moon or a Jerry Falwell, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First, which we see celebrated all around us these days. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

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